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ABSTRACT

A study developed criteria for judging state standards for the English language arts and reading and analyzed the 28 current standards documents. The criteria used for judging the standards relate to the purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards documents; the organization of the standards; disciplinary coverage of the standards; quality of the standards; and anti-literary or anti-academic requirements or expectations. Results indicated: (1) a large number of states have mostly unmeasurable or barely measurable standards; (2) nine documents were rated only "to some extent" in the critical area of reading; (3) many omitted vocabulary development as a reading skill, or mandated a narrow or inadequate approach to it; (4) only 8 of the 28 documents analyzed accompanied the standards with a group of specific titles to illustrate the level of reading difficulty; and (5) a number of documents claimed all decisions about the content of the literature curriculum should remain in the hands of local school districts. Results also indicated two major problems in many of the standards: the "completely unrealistic" expectation that young students are capable of understanding not only the culture in which they live but many different cultures in the world; and attempts to teach students about the "nature of language" often end up stressing the variability and impermanence of the English language. Appendixes contain an explanation of each of the criteria; a discussion of how good standards differed from those needing improvement; an analysis of the standards of the New Standards Project; and ratings and analysis of 28 state standards documents.) (RS)

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State English Standards:

An Appraisal of English Language-Arts/Reading Standards in 28 States

Complete Edition
(Including State Reports)

by
Sandra Stotsky

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CS 216 412

State English Standards:

An Appraisal of
English Language-Arts/Reading Standards
in 28 States

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Thomas B. Fordham Foundation
July 1997

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Foreword

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation is pleased to sponsor this path-breaking appraisal of state English standards by Dr. Sandra Stotsky, the eminent authority on English-language education. We expect it to inform and illumine discussion of just what children should know and be able to do in this most central of subjects as they make their way through America's primary and secondary schools.

Unlike earlier (and often controversial) efforts to set "national standards" for education, the discussion about standards that matters most—and that this report focuses on—is the discussion taking place at the state level. Constitutional responsibility for providing education rests with the states, and it is the states that (in most, though not all, cases) have finally begun to accept the obligation to set academic standards and develop tests and other assessments keyed to those standards.

How good a job are they doing is the question we invited Dr. Stotsky to answer. Just how sound are their standards?

We turned to her because she is the best-qualified person we know to answer those questions. Research associate at both the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the Boston University School of Education, she has been editor of *Research in the Teaching of English*, the research journal of the National Council of Teachers of English. She co-chaired the committee appointed by the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education to rewrite the Bay State's own English language-arts and reading standards—a revision approved by the State Board of Education in January and, by our lights, probably the best extant set of English standards. (She now serves on a successor committee charged with development of statewide assessments in the English language arts and reading.) She has written several important books, including *Connecting Civic Education to Language Education*, and numerous research reports, essays, and reviews in leading professional journals. She is also meticulous, astute, and marvelously energetic. She has done a superb job with this assignment.

The project turned out to have three parts. First, developing criteria by which to appraise state standards in this field. Second, determining which states have standards that are worthy of the name and able to be reviewed—and tracking down copies of them. Third, carefully applying the criteria to the standards and reporting on the results.

We encouraged Dr. Stotsky to avail herself of the advice of other experts as she saw fit. She turned to—and we gratefully acknowledge and thank—three distinguished individuals: James Squire, instructor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and senior research associate at Boston University (and former executive director of the National Council of Teachers of English); Richard Larson, professor of English at Lehman College of the City University of New York; and Allan Glatthorn, professor of education at East Carolina University.

The opening pages of Dr. Stotsky's report carefully describe the project's background and context and the selection process, criteria, and methods that she employed. I shall not repeat those things here, other than to note that we gave her free rein, especially in the specification of criteria for good state standards.

Some may disagree with her criteria—and others, perhaps, with the way she applied them. We welcome that debate. Indeed, we welcome any debate that highlights the fact that not everything called a standard actually meets high standards. The value of this report, we believe, is that it assesses whether the standards in our nation's states are as good as they should be.

As Dr. Stotsky's analysis makes plain, most aren't. Of the 28 sets of state English standards that she examined, just five emerge from this analysis with reasonably high marks. That leaves 45 states—23 others examined by Dr. Stotsky plus 22 that, for reasons she explains, did not make it into this analysis—about which there is legitimate cause for concern by policymakers, educators, and parents.

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation is publishing Dr. Stotsky's report in two forms. The shorter one is a national report that includes state-by-state tabular comparisons but not the extended analyses that Dr. Stotsky prepared for each of 28 states (plus the New Standards Project). The latter are included in the bulkier edition, single "hard copies" of which are available upon request, although the supply is limited. It is also accessible in full through the Foundation's website: *http://www.edexcellence.net*. Neither report is copyrighted and readers are welcome to reproduce them. Finally, I want to thank John W. Barry and Adam Goldin for their editorial assistance on this project.

For further information, feel free to contact the Foundation's office at 1015 Eighteenth Street, NW, Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20036. Our telephone is 202-223-5452, our fax is 202-223-9226 and our e-mail address is Gvanourek@aol.com. (We can also be e-mailed via the website.)

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation is a private foundation that supports research, publications, and action projects of national significance in elementary/secondary education reform, as well as consequential education projects in Dayton, Ohio and vicinity. It has assumed primary sponsorship of the Educational Excellence Network, which Diane Ravitch and I founded in 1981 and which also remains affiliated with the Hudson Institute.

The Foundation's trustees have approved similar appraisals of state standards in other core academic subjects, and we look forward to bringing several more of them into public view in the months ahead.

Chester E. Finn, Jr., President
Thomas B. Fordham Foundation
Washington, D.C.
July 1997

I. The Purpose of this Document

Educational standards documents are being developed in almost every state of the union today. Many Americans see this as a major step forward toward solving one of the most daunting problems that our country faces—the dismal level of academic achievement of our young people.

How do standards help raise student achievement? Standards enable all parents, teachers, and students in a state to have common expectations of what all students should learn. They contribute to the goal of equity by ensuring that expectations are similar no matter where students live or what schools they attend. Standards also help to create coherent educational practices by enabling educators to align their pedagogy and instructional materials with accepted assessment practices. Finally, they establish guidelines for effective teacher preparation, professional development, and certification.

The states began developing their own content standards in 1989, soon after the federal government began to stimulate the development of voluntary national standards for every school subject. Because states have the authority to assess student achievement, the standards they have developed, or are developing, are perhaps even more important than the standards developed by national professional organizations over the past decade in various subject areas, especially in the English language arts and reading.

Although national-standards documents were intended to serve as models for states and local school systems, the two professional organizations responsible for guiding the efforts of English language-arts and reading educators—the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA)—failed abysmally in their own joint effort to create a model for national standards in these subjects. The NCTE/IRA project, which began in 1991, had an unhappy history: After they spent close to $2 million of a federal grant over a three-year period, the U.S. Department of Education decided against further funding of the project on the grounds that the interim draft report contained nothing that resembled standards and provided no guidance on any of the major issues it was expected to address.

Their document, completed with money from a private foundation as well as the NCTE and the IRA's own resources, was unveiled in March 1996 to an equally unpleasant reception. Michael Cohen, a senior adviser to Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, was quoted as saying: "It looks more like a statement of philosophy that provides some background and grounding for professionals in the field.... That's not what people are looking for when they're looking for standards." The late Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, declared "they are not standards at all.... They also throw out the best hope for getting some kind of equity among our widely disparate English curriculums." A *New York Times* editorial criticized the document for its foggy language and its lack of substance.

In light of the failure of leadership by the two major professional organizations in the field to provide the states with a model set of standards (after spending almost $4 million on the project), it is not surprising that the report put out by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in November, 1996, "Making Standards Matter 1996," rated so many states' English language-arts/reading standards documents unacceptable. And even though this report tentatively judged 22 documents as having standards that were clear and specific enough to meet its "common core" criterion, it judged only one state as having exemplary grade-by-grade standards and no state as having exemplary clustered standards.

The purpose of this document is two-fold: to set forth criteria for judging the quality of a state's standards for the English language arts and reading and to present an analysis of the 28 current standards documents based on the use of these criteria. Many states have completed development of standards documents for the English language arts and reading. This is therefore an opportune time for the governors, state legislators, state and local school-board members, and other citizens of these states to find out from an independent analysis what the strengths and shortcomings of their documents are and how they compare with others. A number of other states are in the process of developing first drafts or revising a first or second draft. The criteria set forth in this document may serve as one guide in their ongoing efforts, while the extensive comments on the documents that are analyzed here may help them avoid the limitations noted in these documents. Since assessments in most states will be based on the standards that they have developed or are developing, a set of criteria for judging English language-arts and reading standards as well as an independent analysis of 28 current standards documents should be useful to public officials and others in each state before they proceed further in developing their assessments.

II. The Documents Examined

I used several criteria to determine which documents would be examined. The first was whether the document was clear and specific enough to meet the "common core" criterion in the 1996 AFT report. In this report, 22 documents were so rated, although seven of these were judged borderline. (Some had already been approved by state boards of education; others were still in draft stages. I tried to obtain their most recent version and any other companion documents.) A second criterion was the size of the state with respect to its population. I reviewed the documents for all the major states in the country if they were available, regardless of their rating in the AFT report. I also examined some documents that had not met the AFT "common core" criterion in order to compare my results with those of the AFT. Did documents that met its criterion receive high ratings from me? Did documents that did not meet its criterion receive low ratings from me?

The 28 documents analyzed here include 21 of the 22 that had been rated as meeting the "common core" criterion in the 1996 AFT report. The only one I did not analyze was the draft for the District of Columbia; there have been changes in the governance of its school system since that draft was created, and it is not clear that it will ever be revised and used. I also analyzed seven documents that had not met the AFT's "common core" criterion. Only three major states could not be included in this analysis. California is revising its first draft and will not have the second draft prepared until October; Pennsylvania indicated that a new draft would not be prepared until the fall and did not want to send an outdated draft; Maryland has a first draft available but will not allow anyone to quote from it. Some of the 28 documents examined in this document are newer drafts than those reviewed in the AFT report. In all cases, I indicate the date that is on the document I examined. Almost all documents examined for this analysis were those sent to me during the period from January 1997 to May 1, 1997; in a few cases, I was told of newer, supplementary materials and was able to include them in my analysis before a final cut-off in July.

III. Development of the Criteria

In order to develop a set of comprehensive criteria for judging standards in the English language arts and reading, I did several things. I analyzed a number of standards documents, comparing their features to decide what qualities seem good or deficient across documents. I examined old curriculum guides in the English language arts to find out how they were organized and what subdisciplines they included. I reviewed the research literature on the quality of the evidence on controversial pedagogical techniques. I also took note of the many educational issues that now affect curriculum revision in the schools. Finally, I read through the criticism of NCTE/IRA's standards document, as expressed by English teachers in their own professional journals as well as by public figures.

In part, the criteria reflect my familiarity with research in the English language arts and reading, a familiarity that has been deepened in recent years by my work as editor of *Research in the Teaching of English*, a research journal sponsored by the NCTE. In part, they reflect my work over the years as a consultant to the schools as well as my own teaching experience (or experience giving demonstration lessons), which spans kindergarten through graduate level. Above all, they reflect my recent experience as co-chair of a 12-member committee charged by the Massachusetts Board of Education and the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education to thoroughly revise the draft of an English language-arts standards document that had been unanimously rejected by the previous Board of Education. The draft I helped revise and write was approved by this new Board in January 1997. To judge from the formal evaluations sent to the Department of Education (as well as from subsequent feedback to the Department), it has met with strong approval by the vast majority of English language-arts educators throughout the state. The final document was also praised highly in a lead editorial in the *Boston Globe* in January.

The criteria went through several draft stages in their formulation and I benefited from the advice of a number of reviewers during this process. A detailed explanation for each criterion is provided in Appendix A, where I also define and elaborate on key terms. This appendix should be seen as an integral part of this report and might well be consulted before the results of my analysis are examined.

IV. Criteria for Judging English Language-Arts and Reading Standards

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.
2. It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.
3. It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.
4. It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.
5. It expects students to become literate American citizens.
6. It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.
7. It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.
8. It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.

B. Organization of the standards:

1. They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.
2. They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.
3. They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.

C. Disciplinary coverage of the standards:

1. The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.
2. The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.
3. The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing),

interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and cultural significance.

4. The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.

5. The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.

6. The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.

7. The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.

D. Quality of the standards:

1. They are clear.
2. They are specific.
3. They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).
4. They are comprehensive.
5. They are demanding:

a. They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.

b. They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.

c. They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples.

d. For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.

6. Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.

E. Anti-Literary or Anti-Academic Requirements or Expectations: Negative Criteria:

1. The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.
2. The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.
3. The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.
4. The document implies that all literary and nonliterary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of the logic, accuracy, and adequacy of the supporting evidence.
5. The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.
6. The standards teach moral or social dogma.
7. The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.

V. The Rating System

A 5-point rating scale was used, consisting of "no," "to some extent," "unclear," "for the most part," and "yes." A rating usually reflects a dominant impression of how a particular feature of the document meets the criterion for that feature. For only a few criteria can the answer be a clear yes or no (for example, the document either does or does not acknowledge the existence of a body of literature called American literature). For most of the others (for example, the specificity of its standards), a document can vary in the extent to which it meets the criterion (for example, it may have a large number that are specific but some that aren't). Wherever possible, I quote from the document to support my judgments.

To show how the 28 standards documents compare with each other, the ratings for the 34 criteria were converted into numerical scores. 0 = no; 1 = to some extent; 2 = unclear; 3 = for the most part; and 4 = yes. I gave "unclear" a 2, a point midway in the scale, in order not to penalize excessively what I thought to be unclear language in a document. This rating was used sparingly; I made a judgment whenever possible. Therefore, a rating tells the reader whether that feature of a particular document fully or mostly meets the criterion or whether it mostly does not, or does not at all, meet the criterion.

VI. Results

A. Ratings for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions

Table 1 shows the total scores for Section A; they range from 4 to 29 (out of a possible 36 points). Alabama, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New York, Oklahoma, and Virginia obtained the highest total scores, ranging from 22 to 29. Kansas, Michigan, New

Table 1. Ratings for Section A: Purposes, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions*

	AL	AZ	CO	DE	FL	GA	HI	ID	IL	IN	KS	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO	NH	NJ	NY	OH	OK	OR	TN	TX	UT	VA	WA	WI
1. Written in a readable prose style for the public	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	0	4	1	4	3	4	4	1	4	1	4	3	1	3	4	4	4	3
2. Consistent use of English expected in the classroom	4	2	0	0	4	4	4	4	4	0	0	4	2	3	4	1	4	2	4	0	4	4	4	0	0	4	2	4
3. Use of standard English conventions expected	4	1	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	1	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	1	4	4	1	3	3	3	3	4	3	4
4. American literature mentioned	4	4	3	1	1	4	4	0	4	0	4	4	0	0	1	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	0	1
5. Civic goals of schools acknowledged	3	0	0	3	1	0	1	1	3	3	0	4	1	3	0	4	3	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	4	0	0
6. Decoding skills to be taught systematically	0	4	2	4	2	2	0	0	4	0	0	4	2	4	3	2	2	0	4	0	4	2	2	4	3	4	3	2
7. Independent reading expected	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	4	0	4	4	4	0	4	0	4	1	1	0
8. To be used for statewide assessments	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	0	4	4	2	4	4	4	0	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4
Total	22	19	16	19	19	22	22	18	29	15	7	29	13	19	20	23	29	4	24	13	24	16	19	18	16	29	17	18
	AL	AZ	CO	DE	FL	GA	HI	ID	IL	IN	KS	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO	NH	NJ	NY	OH	OK	OR	TN	TX	UT	VA	WA	WI

* "Unclear" is used as a rating only in this table and it is given a numerical score of 2 for several reasons. In some cases, other sections of the document suggested that a more positive rating might be justified when the language of the document or the standards was too unclear for me to make a confident judgment about what was intended with respect to the criterion. In other cases, other sections suggested that a more negative rating might be justified. Because clearly worded text could not be cited to support a more positive or negative rating, I decided to be charitable and assign a midway score of 2 for "unclear," rather than give no credit at all for a criterion that, with clearer language, might have received a 3 or 4.

Jersey, and Ohio had the lowest total scores, ranging from 4 to 13.

Item Analysis for Section A

Criterion 1: Most documents respect the English language—that is, they are readable (i.e., 23 received a 3 or 4). The standards in five others—Kansas, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, and Tennessee—are cluttered with academic or educational jargon, creating such obscure or cryptic standards as "demonstrate ability to choose appropriate media to clarify attitudes toward cultural diversity" (Ohio) or "investigate and demonstrate understanding of the cultural and historical contexts of themes, issues, and our common heritage as depicted in literature and other texts" (Michigan). Even highly educated citizens may have difficulty understanding what is expected of students in these states.

Criterion 2: In 15 documents, one may assume that English will be the language in the English language-arts classroom because there is nothing to suggest otherwise. In four, however, it is not clear whether other languages may be used in the English language-arts classroom. And in seven, it seems that other languages will be used. For example, Delaware indicates in introductory material that "students' linguistic diversity must be recognized, respected, and built upon." Although sensible and sensitive teachers do not make derogatory remarks about a student's home language, the only way in which linguistic diversity can be "built upon" in the English language-arts class is when other languages are used there. If this is what Delaware wants to have happen, it should say so directly. Indiana and Ohio make the point more clearly. Indiana includes as a "supporting component" of its document a position statement of the National Council of Teachers of English on English/Language Arts practices, which assert that students should have "guidance and frequent opportunities ... to bring their own cultural values, languages, and knowledge to their classroom reading and writing." This assertion is repeated in Ohio's document. Kansas wants students to show "in their speaking and writing that they value their own language and dialect." Kansas has also eliminated the words "English Language" from the title of its document and decided to give K-12 English language-arts teachers henceforth the non-language specific title of "communication arts teachers." Texas inserts the following statement in the introductory material to each grade level: "for ... students whose first language is not English, students' native language may be needed as a foundation for English language acquisition and language learning." Although the statement uses the word "may," a staff member in its department of education informed me that teachers are to "build on students' home language," in response to my question about whether languages other than English will be used in the English language-arts class. She would not answer yes or no.

These statements need to be taken quite seriously; they are not empty rhetoric designed to build self-esteem in students whose home language is not English. Nor will the practices they encourage help second-language learners acquire English faster. Regular classroom teachers are today being encouraged by many faculty in schools of education and by many vocal bilingual educators to allow non-English speaking students to use their home language in the English class, in "response journals" or in other kinds of writing, and to segregate these students into linguistically homogeneous groups (if there are enough such students) to discuss or do part of their school work in their home language. These teachers are being instructed that "research says this is how students best acquire English." But there is no respectable body of research supporting such practices; the research actually shows that students learn English best by attempting to speak, read, and write it as much as possible. In fact, encouraging students to use their home language in the English language-arts class serves to retard their acquisition of English while simultaneously consuming the valuable class time of English-speaking students who are then asked to listen to bilingual presentations of school assignments as a way to learn "respect" for other languages. These documents do not explain how English-speaking teachers can manage learning in a multilingual classroom, and with languages as different as Urdu, Japanese, and Spanish. Nor do they note that these kinds of activities are unacceptable in a foreign-language class as ways to teach the foreign language.

Criterion 3: In some documents, students are expected to demonstrate use of standard English in writing only, implying that nonstandard usage may be acceptable in both formal and informal talk. In others, students are expected to use standard conventions in speaking and writing, but English is not mentioned anywhere as the language whose conventions are to be taught. In those states that encourage the use of other languages in the English language-arts class, perhaps the conventions of whatever home language the child happens to speak will be acceptable. In only 13 documents is it clear that all students are expected to demonstrate competence in using standard English orally and in writing. In some of these, competence with standard English is expected only for formal talk. This seems to me to be a sensible policy for the classroom teacher—to teach and expect use of standard conventions for both writing and formal talk, but to let students use (appropriate) informal language in informal classroom and playground talk.

Criterion 4: American literature is specified by name in only 11 documents, either in the introductory material or in the standards themselves. In five others, the word "American" is used in other ways (e.g., "American cultural heritage") to hint at the existence of an American literature without actually naming it. In 12, it is not mentioned anywhere, either in the introductory material or in the standards. Many documents suggest only that literature shall be drawn from "diverse cultures" or "a variety of authors and cultures." Some documents commendably recommend a balance between classic and contemporary literature but do not indicate what

countries or cultures this literature ought to reflect or give examples of titles or authors to suggest what might constitute classic or contemporary literature. In theory, their students might read only works translated into English that originate in various countries throughout the rest of the world. Massachusetts is the only state that defines American literature as a body of work portraying many different social groups composed by authors from a variety of social groups. Mississippi is the only state that provides an inclusive list of well-known black and white authors who were born in the state, a list that might well serve as a model for other states, though Mississippi's is in an appendix. Interestingly, the small number of documents that mention American literature by name is almost identical to the number that mention or hint at the civic purposes of the English language-arts curriculum.

Criterion 5: Only Massachusetts, Missouri, and Virginia make it clear that one purpose of the English language-arts curriculum in this country is to help students acquire the use of literacy skills for informed participation in the civic life of the country. Missouri forthrightly declares that students are to "understand and apply the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in Missouri and the United States." Virginia wants students in grade 5 to be "introduced to documents and speeches that are important in the study of American history to 1877," and expects students in grade 12 to read selections that relate to the "study of American and Virginia government." Massachusetts suggests that teachers connect the "study of American historical documents with literature" and provides an appendix that links specific works at different educational levels to the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and selected readings from *The Federalist Papers*.

Seven other states also see a civic role for the English language-arts curriculum but fail to specify the sense of citizenship their students are to develop. For example, Illinois wants them to become "productive citizens," Oklahoma wants "literate citizens in a democratic society," while Delaware wants "productive citizens in the 21st century." In some, we find the notion that student are to become "world citizens" (Tennessee) or "citizens of a world community" (South Carolina). Ohio implies that the United States is not a nation at all, but a congeries of many "cultures." In 13 states, the civic ends of the English language arts are completely absent. One wonders how today's educators can expect students to become willing taxpayers and supporters of their public schools and other public institutions if they are so reluctant about forming their civic identity and their sense of civic obligation to each other.

A caveat is in order here, however. Although civic goals should continue to be expressed as one purpose of the English language-arts curriculum, educators must make a clear distinction between a curriculum designed to prepare students for informed and active civic participation that is guided by clear academic goals and a curriculum that attempts to use the entire language-arts curriculum to train students for political activism. The standards for the English language arts and reading that have been prepared as part of the New Standards Project are an example of the latter kind of curriculum.* Many of its standards focus on the development of political skills and activities geared to contemporary social issues. Nowhere is a breadth and depth of historical and literary knowledge ever suggested as the basis for understanding the present or for informed political participation, through either a standard or a suggested activity. Its standards and suggested activities clearly serve to encourage teachers to politicize the content of the English language-arts classroom, and at an early age. (For an analysis of these standards, see Appendix C, which is included in the complete edition of this report.)

Criterion 6: In only nine states does the language of the document indicate that decoding skills are to be taught explicitly and systematically. Texas, New York, and Illinois, for example, clearly expect students to identify words by means of decoding and without having to rely on context clues. In three, it seems as if they will, but the wording should be improved. It is unclear in nine others. And in seven, it will clearly not be taught systematically. Alabama, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, New Jersey, and Ohio are diehard "whole language" states, and do not encourage independent teacher judgment despite the findings of a vast body of research on the topic. Their expectations that whole-language pedagogy be taught are unmistakable.

Criterion 7: Only eight states explicitly state that they expect students to engage regularly in independent reading in or outside of school. For example, Illinois has a model benchmark that expects students from elementary school on to "set, monitor and accomplish" quantitative and qualitative reading goals "with selections from a variety of sources;" how much material, what kind, and the grade level are to be determined individually. New York specifies—in a companion document, not in its standards—how much outside reading students should do and its quality, but what it includes in its list of quality reading (students' own writing) would seem to

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* The New Standards Project (NSP) is a joint program of the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh and the National Center on Education and the Economy in Rochester, New York. It has been funded chiefly by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the MacArthur Foundation. Supplemental funding for specific research projects has been obtained from the federal government. Its goal is to develop a new system of assessments (performance tasks, projects, and portfolios) designed to improve the performance of all students and to gauge student progress toward high national education standards. According to a Summer 1994 NCTE newsletter, NCTE holds a sub-contract with NSP to provide leadership for its Literacy Unit. Many NCTE members, selected by the NCTE leadership, are involved in performance task development, scoring, and piloting.

undermine qualitative goals. Indiana expects students throughout the grades to select reading materials from classroom libraries and school library media centers. New Hampshire expects students to "read independently" or "intensively" during "free time" for "personal and academic purposes." Ohio expects students to "engage in independent reading programs which are tailored to their individual interests, needs, and personalities." Five other states hint at it in some way. But 14 do not mention regular independent reading over the grades at all, a possible reflection of the general lack of expectations today. No matter how demanding standards may be, students will not improve much as readers or writers if they do not read regularly on their own.

Criterion 8: Most documents indicate that their standards will be used as the basis for statewide assessments. Five do not, but the intention may be stated elsewhere, in other material.

B. Ratings for Section B: Organization of the Standards

Table 2 shows the total scores for Section B. They range from a low of 5 to the maximum of 12 points possible for this section. Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin obtained the maximum of 12. Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi, and New Jersey obtained the lowest scores—either 5 or 6.

Item Analysis for Section B

Criterion 1: All documents present standards either grade by grade or for clusters of four or fewer grade levels. However, many states with grade-by-grade standards (e.g., Texas) keep the wording of many standards the same for a span of several grade levels, thus making a grade-by-grade layout less meaningful.

Criterion 2: Thirteen states present their standards in strands that relate to coherent bodies of scholarship or research. Seven are rated "for the most part" (3 out of 4 possible points) because they combine two major areas (like reading and listening, writing and speaking, or reading and literature) and do not address one or both of the two areas well. For instance, when reading and listening or writing and speaking are combined, documents often fail to make important distinctions between oral and written language processes; that is, between listening and reading and between writing and speaking. Moreover, the interplay between listening and speaking may be obscured. These two processes naturally go together, as students usually practice listening in the context of a speaker, and speaking in the context of a listener. (Reading is usually a solitary activity, and writing can take place without the reading of anything except the text one is writing.) Sometimes when reading and literature are combined, documents fail to make distinctions between literary and nonliterary reading. Moreover, literary study tends to get short shrift, to judge by these documents. If each area in a combined strand is dealt with adequately, the document is not penalized in the rating for this criterion.

Another eight states vary considerably in how they have chosen to group their standards and generally have problems in the standards (such as omitting key concepts or skills in particular areas). Although the NCTE and the IRA both recommend the integration of language processes in classroom activities, this integration is best done by the classroom teacher during lesson planning, not in a curriculum or standards document.

Criterion 3: Sixteen documents make distinctions between major concepts and subordinate skills. Another 12 fail to make these distinctions, often listing all the objectives in an area as long series, making it difficult to identify what is missing. Development of meaningful subcategories usually pays off in disciplinary coverage and coherence. Documents without them tend to have inadequate coverage in most subdisciplines.

C. Ratings for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage

Table 3 shows the total scores for Section C. They range from 5 to 25. Arizona, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Ohio, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin obtained the highest total scores, ranging from 20 to 25. Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oregon, and Tennessee obtained the lowest scores, ranging from 5 to 9.

Item Analysis for Section C

Criterion 1: For listening and speaking, 17 documents address all or almost all of the areas listed in the criterion (i.e., they received a 3 or 4). Another 11 address them only to a limited extent. Interestingly, in a few states (Texas, for example), the listening and speaking objectives are in some respects stronger than the writing objectives. This is, in large part, I believe, because the concepts inherent in effective argumentation or persuasion (such as thesis, coherence, and the marshalling of adequate evidence) are as important as they always were, and because the field of speech communication has not lost its roots in classical rhetoric or become as swamped by the "process" movement as the field of composition has.

Criterion 2: For reading, only five states address all the areas listed in the criterion. Most of the documents rated "for the most part" (3 out of 4 points) are deficient only because they lack expectations—or clear and precise expectations—for the development of a reading vocabulary (or, as it may also be worded, for systematic word study). Many other documents also lack clear expectations for the development of a reading vocabulary and are deficient in other respects as well.

Some states such as Arizona, Michigan, and New York do

Table 2. Ratings for Section B: Organization of the Standards

	AL	AZ	CO	DE	FL	GA	HI	ID	IL	IN	KS	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO	NH	NJ	NY	OH	OK	OR	TN	TX	UT	VA	WA	WI
1. Organizaed grade by grade or in clusters	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
2. Based on categories from research	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	0	4	3	4	3	1	3	1	1	3	1	1	3	1	4	4	4	1	4	4	4
3. Higher- and lower-level skills sorted	1	4	4	4	4	0	1	1	4	0	0	4	1	4	1	1	0	0	4	4	3	4	0	4	4	4	4	4
Total	8	12	11	12	12	8	9	5	12	7	8	11	6	11	6	6	7	5	9	11	8	12	8	12	9	12	12	12
	AL	AZ	CO	DE	FL	GA	HI	ID	IL	IN	KS	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO	NH	NJ	NY	OH	OK	OR	TN	TX	UT	VA	WA	WI

Table 3. Ratings for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage

	AL	AZ	CO	DE	FL	GA	HI	ID	IL	IN	KS	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO	NH	NJ	NY	OH	OK	OR	TN	TX	UT	VA	WA	WI
1. Listening & speaking	1	3	1	1	3	3	3	1	4	1	1	3	0	3	4	4	3	1	1	3	1	1	3	3	4	4	4	4
2. Reading	1	3	3	3	4	3	1	1	4	3	1	3	3	1	3	1	3	1	3	3	4	1	1	3	4	4	3	3
3. Literature	1	3	1	3	3	3	1	1	3	1	1	3	3	0	1	1	3	1	3	3	3	1	0	3	3	3	1	3
4. Writing	1	3	3	3	3	4	1	1	4	1	1	4	3	1	1	1	3	1	4	4	4	1	3	3	4	4	4	4
5. Language conventions	4	3	4	1	3	4	1	1	4	1	1	4	3	0	4	1	3	0	4	4	1	1	1	3	4	1	4	4
6. Language	4	3	0	0	1	4	0	0	1	0	0	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
7. Research	3	4	3	3	4	4	1	3	4	1	1	4	1	4	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	1	1	4	3	3	3	4
Total	15	22	15	14	21	25	8	8	24	8	6	25	14	9	17	11	18	5	18	21	16	6	9	20	22	20	19	25
	AL	AZ	CO	DE	FL	GA	HI	ID	IL	IN	KS	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO	NH	NJ	NY	OH	OK	OR	TN	TX	UT	VA	WA	WI

not mention the development of a reading (and, ultimately, a writing) vocabulary at all. Others mention the topic in a very general way (e.g., "develop a reading vocabulary"), acknowledging its importance, but do not provide any details on the features of vocabulary knowledge or word relationships that students should be expected to learn at different educational levels. Yet others provide some detail, but the language used seems to prescribe extremely limited ways in which teachers can approach development of a reading vocabulary.

What do some of the highest rated documents do? In Oklahoma, students in grade 2 are to learn about "naming, describing, and acting words," in grades 4-5, "multiple meanings, definitions, and meaning in context," in grade 6-8, word origins, roots and affixes, and levels of usage, and, in 9-12, connotation/denotation, etymology, levels of usage, and neologisms. In the late-elementary grades, Illinois students are to use root words, synonyms, antonyms, word origins, and derivations to comprehend new words; in middle school, they are to "expand knowledge of word origins and derivations and use idioms, analogies, metaphors and similes to extend vocabulary development;" and in early and late high school, they "apply knowledge of word origins and derivations to comprehend words used in specific content areas." In Pre-K-4, Massachusetts students are to identify and use words related as antonyms, synonyms, members of classifications, compounds, homophones, and homographs; in grades 5-8, words related as shades of meaning and through word parts and word origins; and in grades 9-12, idioms, cognates, words with literal and figurative meanings, patterns of word changes indicating different meanings or functions, learned and foreign words used frequently in written English, and literary allusions derived from Greek, Latin, Norse mythology, and the Bible.

What do states do to constrain teachers to specific pedagogical approaches for vocabulary development? Ohio, for example, limits students' vocabulary growth to those words they happen to hear in the media or encounter in their reading by specifying the use of "context clues" (and the dictionary) as the only way to expand a reading vocabulary. Although Texas expects students to "acquire an extensive vocabulary through reading and systematic word study," it wants almost total reliance on context clues and prior knowledge, instructing teachers that students are to "draw on experiences to bring meanings to words in context." In other words, only contextual approaches are to be used, thus precluding any systematic study of words through noncontextual approaches.

To what can this dogmatic approach to vocabulary development be attributed? In part, it is an understandable reaction to a once common—but not very productive—activity in English classes: Students were assigned lists of words each week and asked to come up with definitions and sentences using them. But it also reflects, in part, the influence of the organic approach to reading and writing (i.e., the reading and writing of "whole texts") which has discredited skill work or a focus on discrete learning of any kind, and inhibited teachers from doing much about vocabulary development in a systematic way. Documents that promote "whole language" teaching are usually among those that do not expect students to acquire knowledge of word meanings through the systematic, noncontextual study of words.

Criterion 3: For literary study, 15 documents address most of the areas listed in the criterion. However, most of them lack literary and cultural specifics. Another 13 lack other features spelled out in the criterion, such as the use of various interpretive lenses. Despite its importance to most English teachers and the fact that English is the only subject area in the curriculum where literature is taught, literary study did not do very well in the standards documents I examined. It is not clear why. In some documents (e.g., Missouri, Tennessee, and Minnesota's), objectives for literary study are interspersed with objectives for reading and are almost completely neglected; did their development committees exclude secondary school English teachers? Or was there a deliberate effort to downgrade literary study, to correspond with the relative absence of attention to literary study apparent in the standards document put out by the NCTE/IRA itself? It is difficult to believe that most high-school English teachers have suddenly become indifferent to the study of literature, given that it is probably the passion for literature that inspired them to become English majors in college and then English teachers.

The failure of most documents to require study of any general literary specifics (such as "American literature" or "its literary movements") is also puzzling. Although English teachers have traditionally opposed literary mandates from official sources, preferring to use their own judgment and school-district guidelines to devise their classroom literature programs, there is nothing—in theory, at least—oppressive about including in a standards document a requirement that students study the literature of their own country, particularly in grade 11, where it has traditionally been taught. Nor is it oppressive to expect students to study works by well-regarded authors who wrote about their own state or region, an intention that can be expressed in a general statement without necessarily mentioning specific authors. Very few states mention the existence of American literature, never mind explicitly requiring its study, and at just one grade level at that.

Alabama, Georgia, and Virginia do the most in their standards with regard to these literary criteria. Alabama expects students to read from lists of American authors, learn about trends in American literature, trace its development, compare the development of various genres in American literature, and recognize the style of selected American authors, and display similar knowledge of British literature, although it does not specify a single author or title. Georgia expects students in grade 11 to study American literature (commendably described as "representing diverse backgrounds and tra-

ditions"), its literary movements, periods, and the major cultural, religious, philosophical, and political influences on it at different periods, and to do the same with British literature in grade 12, also without specifying particular authors or titles. Virginia also requires the study of American literature and its literary periods in its standards. It further expects students to "contrast periods in American literature," "differentiate among archetypal characters in American literature," "describe the major themes in American literature," "describe contributions of different cultures to the development of American literature," and "compare and contrast the works of contemporary and past American poets." It requires the study of British and other world literature as well. Hawaii requires students in grades 9-12 to "develop an understanding of the major periods of English and American literature," but offers no other details. Five other states mention in a standard that they require the study of American literature, but that is the extent of the expectation. It is a pity that the writers of Mississippi's document did not create one standard requiring the study of important writers from their state from kindergarten to grade 12. It is something that every state can do, and it is a meaningful way to make sure that students learn about different social communities in the state.

Some states have come up with euphemisms for "American literature." Michigan hints at a "common heritage," Delaware and Wisconsin mention "American cultural heritage," and Texas introduces the notion of a "shared culture," seeing it as something different from "one's culture" and the "culture of others." But none of these states spells out what might constitute that common heritage or shared culture. Massachusetts is the only state to spell out what it means by "our literary heritage." It provides two suggested lists in its appendices, a literary heritage list designating, for the most part, key authors (not works) contributing to American and British literary culture up to World War II, and a list of contemporary American authors as well as important authors from other countries and cultures at different historical periods. In a guiding principle, it recommends a balance between the two lists in the construction of a literature program and, in fact, is currently attempting to draw equally from the two lists in the selection of literary passages for forthcoming statewide assessments.

Criterion 4: In writing, 18 documents were rated either 3 or 4 because they address all or almost all the areas listed in the criterion. Another ten were rated only "to some extent" (1 out of 4), usually because the document writers did not seem to expect students to do more than demonstrate use of all the writing processes. When documents fail to expect the demonstration of such important concepts in composition as a thesis or controlling idea, coherence, topic sentences, the development of a paragraph, or the use of transitions, the citizens of those states have cause for concern.

Criterion 5: Just about all documents expect "correct" language use or use of all language conventions in writing. Although most do not indicate what they mean by "correct," I have chosen to interpret this word as equivalent in meaning to "standard." Sixteen documents expect students to demonstrate "correct" language in both writing and formal (if not informal) speaking, and spell out a few different details over the grades. Another 12 were rated down because they either do not spell out any details or do not expect students to demonstrate use of "correct" or standard English in speaking at all. Documents were not rated down if they confine use of standard English in speaking to formal oral presentations only.

Criterion 6: Only four states (Alabama, Georgia, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin) clearly expect students to learn about the history and essential characteristics of the English language (Arizona seems to have this expectation, but it does not mention the name of the language whose history students are to study). Seventeen states express no expectations that students are to learn anything academic about the nature of the language they speak, read, and write. Another seven confine their expectations in this area to such matters as word origins or dialect. Perhaps the subject is not required for college English majors. If it is not, here is one area in which state boards of education can upgrade the academic offerings at their public universities through teacher recertification requirements.

Some of the documents that do address the topic of dialect differences seem to expect unnecessarily detailed attention to them by K-12 students. The features, use, and significance of various dialects are an appropriate topic of study for graduate students, who are trained to detect, transcribe, and interpret dialect features across social, occupational, and regional groups. Yet, Michigan, for example, wants upper elementary school students to explore "regional language variations" in this country. Although all students need to learn why there are dialect differences and that all students come to school quite naturally speaking the language of their homes and neighborhoods (and that no one should be mocked or exalted on account of his or her home language), they do not need to do graduate level work on the topic. (How and why an author uses dialect in the dialogue of literary characters should be a part of their literary study.) One likely reason for the unwarranted emphasis on the existence of dialect variations in a few documents is that it provides a handy point of departure for spending classroom time discussing prejudice in our society.

Criterion 7: Research processes and sources of information are dealt with quite well in this group of documents, in large part, I believe, because the advanced technology in use in the workplace in our society has made schools acutely aware of the need to teach students how to access and use information from this technology. Twenty-one received high ratings (3 or 4). Only seven were rated low, usually because they fail to expect students to learn how to develop and sequence suitable research questions for different areas of inquiry or to evaluate information obtained from various sources. The

uneven quality of the information students can now pull off the Internet with ease is of growing concern to most adult users, and the schools are derelict if they do not expect students to understand the problem, even if there are no easy solutions to it.

D. Ratings for Section D: Quality of the Standards

Table 4 shows the total scores for Section D. They range from a low of 2 to a high of 29 (out of 36 possible points). Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Utah, and Wisconsin received the highest total scores (from 20 to 29). Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and Tennessee received the lowest total scores (from 2 to 11). In some ways, however, these totals may be misleading. Many states do not provide in their standards document any writing samples or examples of activities illustrating other standards, and thus received no points for these criteria. Yet, they may have them in a companion document that was not sent to me or that was not available at the time.

Item Analysis for Section D

Criterion 1: The ratings for clarity of the language of the standards are generally quite satisfactory; these ratings are similar to the ratings for Section A, Criterion 1. Twenty-four documents received ratings of either 3 or 4. Only four documents were rated as having standards whose language is deficient in clarity or intelligibility.

Criterion 2: Fewer documents did as well on specificity. Thirteen were rated unsatisfactory (i.e., they received a 1 or 0). This was almost always because their standards seemed to be much too general for use as an indication of "what students know and can do." Standards like "compare and contrast communications in their writing and speaking," "respond formally and informally to a variety of themes and genres," "write effectively for public audiences," "appreciate and respond to written, spoken, and audio-visual texts," "use oral communication to influence the behavior of others," or "read with comprehension" are simply too broad to point teachers or assessors to a particular focus. (See Appendix B for a contrast between two documents in the specificity of their standards for middle-grade reading.)

Criterion 3: The rating that a document's standards received for specificity tended to be similar to the rating that they received on measurability; document writers who had difficulty formulating specific standards tended to come up with unmeasurable ones. Standards judged as unmeasurable are unmeasurable for many reasons, as I shall indicate below, not just because they are too general, and not necessarily because they cannot be measured quantitatively.

Some are unmeasurable because they are process standards; that is, they refer to activities inside a student's head and cannot be easily observed, or they refer to visible activities leading to some kind of qualitative result, but the activities in themselves do not have any necessary or clear correlation with the quality of the result. For example, how can one know what strategies or how many strategies students use when they "employ multiple strategies to construct meaning while reading, listening to, viewing, or creating texts?" Or, as another example, how can one be sure that the words or sources a student has put down on a piece of paper to demonstrate that he can "generate a list of key words or sources for a research topic" have significantly influenced the research paper he ultimately produces?

Some standards are unmeasurable because they focus on values or attitudes, not on academic content. A standard like "demonstrate respect for differences in attitude, behavior, values, and beliefs within formal and informal groups" cannot be measured with external criteria because it is impossible to agree on what behavior constitutes that kind of respect *in situ*; the specific context will heavily influence an observer's judgment. Nor is it possible to determine how sincere a student's show of respect may be, even if one could frame behavioral criteria. Similarly, for a standard like "enjoy works from their own culture and other cultures," how can we be sure that the student really enjoys the works and is not saying so because she knows the response expected of her?

Some standards are unmeasurable because they are nothing more than statements of broad philosophical goals. If a document wants students to "use literature as a resource for shaping decisions," can assessors devise a meaningful opportunity for students to make a decision, provide what they are sure is a relevant literary work, and then measure the quality of the decision?

Some are unmeasurable because they are simply not standards, such as "discuss personal experiences" or "use literature as one stimulus for writing." What does a discussion of personal experience or the use of literature for stimulating a writing activity tell us about intellectual growth?

Finally, some standards are unmeasurable because they are undoable. For example, what is intended by the expectation that students are to "connect life's experience with the life experiences, language, customs and culture of others?" How could anyone connect his or her life's experiences with someone else's language? What could it possibly mean?

Criterion 4: For comprehensiveness, only 14 documents were rated satisfactory (3 or 4). This rating directly reflects the ratings in Section C, which indicate the extent to which each subdiscipline in the English language arts is covered clearly by the standards. States that did not address many of the important components of each subdiscipline could not receive a high rating for comprehensiveness. The ratings on this criterion indicate that half the states are not satisfactorily addressing the content that should be covered in the

Table 4. Ratings for Section D: Quality of the Standards

	AL	AZ	CO	DE	FL	GA	HI	ID	IL	IN	KS	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO	NH	NJ	NY	OH	OK	OR	TN	TX	UT	VA	WA	WI
1. Clear	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	4	1	3	3	3	4	3	4	1	4	4	1	3	4	4	4	3
2. Specific	1	4	3	3	3	3	1	1	4	1	0	4	1	3	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	4	0	3	4	3	3	4
3. Measurable	1	4	3	3	3	3	1	0	4	1	0	4	1	4	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	4	0	3	4	3	3	4
4. Comprehensive	1	3	1	1	3	3	0	1	3	1	0	3	1	1	1	1	3	0	3	3	3	0	1	3	4	3	3	3
5a. Complexity	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	1	3	1	0	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	1	0	3	3	3	1	3
5b. Reading level	4	0	1	0	0	0	4	3	0	0	0	4	0	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5c. Writing level	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
5d. Other examples	1	4	1	1	4	0	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	4	1	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1
6. Common core	0	3	0	3	3	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	1	0	3	3	3	1	3
Total	12	25	14	20	21	19	11	14	22	9	2	29	7	15	16	11	11	7	24	13	17	14	2	18	25	19	15	22
	AL	AZ	CO	DE	FL	GA	HI	ID	IL	IN	KS	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO	NH	NJ	NY	OH	OK	OR	TN	TX	UT	VA	WA	WI

English language-arts class; as I have pointed out above, two prime examples of neglected or missing content are systematic development of a reading—and writing—vocabulary and study of the English language.

Although one might be tempted to think otherwise, comprehensiveness is not necessarily related to the length of the document. Adequate coverage often seemed to be affected strongly by the way in which the standards in a document were organized. States that did not organize their standards in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research often failed to address all the components of these areas in their standards; undoubtedly, the use of categories unrelated to a body of existing knowledge made it difficult for the document writers to discern what was missing or inadequately addressed over the grades for specific disciplines. For example, Mississippi combines language skills in different ways as part of between 10 and 14 competencies per grade, all keyed to seven broad goals. Writing objectives are scattered under several competencies rather than grouped in one strand devoted to writing, and many key concepts in composition instruction do not get mentioned anywhere, possibly as a result of the dispersal of writing objectives.

Comprehensiveness also seemed to be affected by the extent to which major concepts and skills in each subdiscipline were sorted into meaningful subcategories. Without them, it may have been difficult to discern what was missing or inadequately addressed over the grades. Virtually every document that received an unsatisfactory rating for comprehensiveness also received less than a 4 for both B.2 (standards are grouped in categories that reflect coherent bodies of research or scholarship) and B.3 (higher-order skills are distinguished from lower-level skills) or for either. On the other hand, some that did not get a 4 for these two criteria did get satisfactory ratings for comprehensiveness; adequate coverage of subdisciplines was possible even if a document had organized its standards in unusual categories or presented just a long string of items in each category. Some relatively brief documents provide adequate coverage because they zero in on the central components of each subdiscipline in the English language arts and do not fill up the document with unnecessary rhetoric or repetitious verbiage.

Criteria 5a, 5b, 5c, and 5d: One important issue for those who believe that good standards documents can improve the state of education is the question of rigor. Many standards look good on paper, but how can one tell how really demanding they are? How can one tell if they are little more than specifications for minimum competency? These four criteria get at this question.

Clear and regular increases in the intellectual complexity of the standards for a particular area over the grades are one significant indicator of rigor. It takes time to work out wording that captures the increase in intellectual complexity expected over the grades for each major dimension of learning in the English language arts, mainly because gradual growth in language skills is more difficult to articulate than grade-by-grade differences in straight academic content. But many states have been able to do this well in many areas. (See Appendix B for an example of how one document articulated clear increases in intellectual complexity in its expectations for reading.)

Twelve states received a rating of 3 for this criterion. Although increases were not clearly worked out in all areas at all educational levels, they received a 3 rather than a 4 chiefly because they all failed *in their reading and literature standards* to identify—for each educational level, but especially at the high school level—specific titles of literary works (or an option from a clearly defined group of works, such as "one of Shakespeare's tragedies") that would indicate exactly what level of difficulty is required for meeting the standard. Such titles would also inform parents and others what literary works are deemed culturally significant enough by their English language-arts educators to require their study by all students. Although a few of these states do require students through their standards to study (unnamed) selections from American or British literary history, or to cover important literary traditions in these two bodies of literature, this generic requirement does not quite make clear the level of difficulty required.

The ratings for 5b show that only eight of the 28 states offer examples of specific titles of literary or academic works to suggest the level of reading difficulty they would like students to handle at a particular educational level. This number is deceptive, however. In three of these documents, only a few titles appear in the entire document. In several others, groups of titles are offered on occasion. In only one (Massachusetts) is there a consistent effort to accompany each gradespan standard with a specific title. The many zeroes for ratings of this criterion point to a profound academic problem that each state must address, as I will discuss in the conclusion to this document.

As the ratings for 5c indicate, only six documents include some writing samples to suggest the kind or quality of writing that is expected at various educational levels, although some samples are in companion documents, and companion documents may now be available for more than six states. With its standards, Wisconsin, for example, provides writing samples at four levels of proficiency for the high-school level. New York offers writing samples at the end of its standards document, but more to indicate the kind of writing it wishes to promote and how teachers might respond to it than the level of performance desired. Ideally, samples of writing should enable parents, teachers, and other readers to recognize different levels of skill in writing that students are expected to attain over the grades.

On the other hand, as 5d shows, 19 documents make an attempt to provide examples of other aspects of their standards,

although only six do so frequently. Many indicate little more than the kind of reading, speaking, or writing assignment students could undertake (e.g., interview adults in the community, prepare a science report, survey classmates, produce a flow chart and diagrams, or assemble notes). But some provide "vignettes"—lengthy descriptions of classroom activities and/or examples of student writing—usually in companion documents. These are useful and informative. The chief drawback of the assignment as an example is that it does not necessarily indicate quality. Useful illustrations might include the title of a well-known literary work or a sample piece of student writing judged proficient at a particular grade level.

Criterion 6: The ratings for this criterion directly reflect ratings for the other criteria in this section. Based on these ratings, only 13 states—Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin—*appear* to come close to a common core of high academic expectations for their students. However, we cannot be sure how high their academic expectations actually are because not one of these states requires specific levels of reading difficulty for achievement of its standards or familiarity with even one significant work in American literary or cultural history—not even the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream," or the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. Moreover, some of these states simultaneously recommend or require in varying degrees pedagogical approaches that are anti-literary or anti-intellectual in thrust, as we shall see.

E. Ratings for Section E: Anti-Literary or Anti-Academic Requirements or Expectations—Negative Criteria

Table 5 shows the total scores for Section E. They range from 0 (the best) to 20 (the worst), out of a possible 28 points. Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia received the lowest, or best, total scores (from 0 to 2), while Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Washington received the highest total scores (from 15 to 20).

Item Analysis for Section E

Criterion 1: The notion that a culture has a single "perspective"—that all those who may be identified as its members express or subconsciously reflect similar beliefs, values, or attitudes about a variety of social or intellectual issues—comes through clearly in eight documents and, to some extent, in nine others. These documents sometimes imply that what is in any one literary work is an accurate and comprehensive portrait of the author's culture, rather than a part of a complex whole that might well include other works with very different views of the culture. Sometimes documents refer to literary works as "representing" a culture, as if any literary work can "represent" a complex culture. They often expect K-12 students to learn the essential characteristics of many different cultures in the world from reading one or two works about them, when in fact it takes broad and deep reading of many works in a culture to give one insights into the basic values and beliefs that may permeate it. Since most students are incapable of doing that broad and deep reading, what is more likely happening is that students are being taught stereotypes or superficial generalizations about other cultures by their teachers. And their teachers are probably being fed these stereotypes or generalizations about other cultures in schools of education or in college cultural-studies departments because most high-school English teachers, not to mention elementary-school teachers, have not been trained in the literature written in other cultures or languages. Otherwise English teachers would not be English teachers.

In 11 documents, there is no implication that the cultures of modern or complex social groups reflect a single or singular perspective. In these documents, literary works are not said to "represent" a people. Nor do they expect students, especially young students, to determine the culture of a particular people by reading a few works by authors who may come from that culture. However, even in these documents, there is nothing to suggest that students ought to note the varying and often conflicting values and beliefs that one can find in almost any culture in the world, as expressed by its literary and other artists. This is a point that should be embedded in a standard.

Criterion 2: A very large number of documents (19) require or want students to relate the literature they read to their lives, or to interpret what they read from within the framework of their personal experiences. One requires students to "identify commonalities between personal experiences and story elements" as a reading strategy in grade 4. Another recommends that students "incorporate personal experiences, prior knowledge and the text itself into their own interpretations;" one must feel grateful here that the text is to play at least some role in their interpretations. Some go beyond expecting students to make a connection between their personal lives and the literature they read and want them to apply what they read in a literary work to their own and others' lives. Michigan has an entire category of standards for which students are to "apply knowledge, ideas, and issues drawn from texts to their lives and the lives of others." Florida, too, wants students in grades 6-8 to respond to a work of literature "by interpreting selected phrases, sentences, or passages and applying the information to personal life."

For this rating, I did not count standards for grades K-2 that want students to relate what they read to their "prior knowledge" or personal experiences; this injunction can make sense in these grades. Nor would I mark down documents that allowed students to bring their personal experiences to bear on a literary work if they chose to do so (no document approached the issue in this manner). But to require students at higher educational levels to read their lives into the litera-

Table 5. Ratings for Section E: Anti-Literary or Anti-Academic Requirements or Expectations*

	AL	AZ	CO	DE	FL	GA	HI	ID	IL	IN	KS	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO	NH	NJ	NY	OH	OK	OR	TN	TX	UT	VA	WA	WI
1. Cultures considered to have single "perspective"	1	1	4	4	1	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	4	4	0	4	0	1	4	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	4	1
2. One's life to be read into literary texts	4	0	0	4	4	0	4	4	3	0	1	0	4	0	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	1	1	4	4	0	4	4
3. Literature to be chosen for social issues	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	4	4	3	0	0	4	0	1	0	4	0	1	1	0	4	4
4. Texts seen as having no limits to interpretations	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	1	0	1	4	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Bias present in the examples offered	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
6. Dogma and generalizations taught	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
7. Specific pedagogy mandated	1	0	0	0	3	0	1	4	0	4	4	0	0	1	1	3	1	4	0	4	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
Total	7	1	12	14	14	1	9	13	3	4	14	0	13	11	8	12	10	18	15	12	2	5	2	7	7	0	13	10
	AL	AZ	CO	DE	FL	GA	HI	ID	IL	IN	KS	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO	NH	NJ	NY	OH	OK	OR	TN	TX	UT	VA	WA	WI

* These negative criteria are rated in the same way that the other criteria are rated: "no," "to some extent," "for the most part," or "yes." But the totals are interpreted in the opposite way. Those states receiving the highest totals are the "worst": Their standards documents contain the most anti-literary or anti-academic requirements or expectations. Those states receiving the lowest totals are the "best": Their standards documents contain few or no anti-literary or anti-academic requirements or expectations.

ture they are asked to study undermines the very capacity of a literary work to help readers transcend their limited experiences. A major function of literature is to expand perspectives and free students from insularity. Thus, we should want to know what new insights into human relationships or into the deployment of literary skill students have gained from a literary work, rather than to compel them to reduce the experiences within the work to those with which they are already familiar.

Requiring personal application of literary understandings is also fraught with hazard. There are examples of love-struck adolescents who have read *Romeo and Juliet* and then attempted to apply the characters' "solution" to their lives because their parents objected to their relationship. Students may bring misunderstood ideas as well as bad ideas in what they read to their own or others' lives. Such standards encourage an irresponsible and potentially dangerous pedagogy.

Criterion 3: Ten documents emphasize using literature to study contemporary social issues. This is a gross misuse of the time allotted for literary study, as well as an abuse of literature itself, as I have explained in the rationale for this criterion. Many fine works of literature, contemporary as well as older works already in the curriculum, address a variety of social issues and the issues they address should be part of the discussion of them. But to expect or encourage teachers to choose works for classroom study for that purpose is to militate against literary quality or the construction of a balanced and civically healthy literature program for K-12 students.

Criterion 4: Eleven documents expect students to learn, to varying extents, that literary works are susceptible of a variety of interpretations. That some texts may be open to more than one interpretation is an unarguable generalization to teach students, as long as they learn, at the same time, that the quality or weight of the evidence for an interpretation is a qualification that must be taken into account and that different interpretations of a particular text are not necessarily of equal validity. But the generalization is never offered with qualifications. For example, Kansas expects students to learn that "literature may have more than one interpretation supported by details from the text." Florida wants students to know "that a literary text may elicit a wide variety of valid responses" without noting that the responses would all have to demonstrate the same level of adequacy to be equally "valid." Ohio expects students to "recognize diverse literary interpretations" but says nothing at all about validity in its standard.

In several documents, there is the implication that an infinite number of interpretations are possible for many kinds of texts. For example, New Hampshire wants students from grade 4 on to "understand that a single text ... may elicit a variety of responses and informed, reasoned interpretations" and gives a variety of examples. Delaware also expects K-8 students to "analyze and evaluate information and messages" by "acknowledging the possibility of a variety of interpretations of the same text." Such assertions leave elementary-school teachers in particular with the erroneous and damaging idea that informational texts are as open in meaning as poems.

In some documents, there is the even more problematic notion that no rational or impartial criteria for making judgments are even possible. For example, one criterion for analytical language that New York offers in its standards document is "flexible," with the explanation that "a thorough analysis requires being able to view the same event or text from more than one point of view and recognizing the relative validity of divergent points of view." Another criterion is "cultural," with the explanation that "the criteria for analysis and evaluation derive from the shared values of a group." Nothing is said here about accuracy, comprehensiveness of facts, or the logical nature of the reasoning underlying the point of view. Indeed, the implication is that logical reasoning itself differs from group to group because it is grounded in a group's particular values, and is thus culture-specific.

Criterion 5: Most documents offer no writing samples at all. Thus, they offer no grounds for a negative rating on this item. Of those few that do, New York and Colorado feature writing samples that express political bias, blanket generalizations, or clear political stances on contemporary social issues. One might argue that these states are simply showing what some students have written in response to a particular writing assignment. However, when alternative points of view are not also shown in equally acceptable or proficient samples of writing, or when no marginal teacher comments are shown asking a student to provide evidence for a political stance, point of view, or blanket generalization, one may wonder whether teachers are being encouraged or coerced to see the expressed point of view or blanket generalization as an accepted social "truth."

Criterion 6: In most documents, most learning standards address intellectual growth or writing and reading processes. But a few documents stray from this academic path and moralize in their standards. Mississippi students are to "value literature because it incorporates linguistic and cultural diversity." Ohio students are to "value the thinking and language of others." Some documents use their standards to impart contemporary social dogma; the standard is simply the expression of a blanket generalization that students are to regurgitate. Florida students are to learn that "language and literature are primary means by which culture is transmitted." Wisconsin students are to learn that "all dialects communicate equally well in their own cultural settings" and that "language variations [are] the natural outcome of differences in culture, gender, social class, and ethnicity." Kansas students are to understand that "multiple interpretations are a result of the differences in personal experiences and backgrounds."

There are many problems with standards that moralize or teach social dogma. One is that they are often not clear in

meaning. For example, what does it mean to want students to value literature because it incorporates linguistic and cultural diversity? Must every work incorporate diversity for us to value it? Or are students to think literature is worth reading in general only because it has been written by people around the world, not because of what literary writers have to say, how they say it, or how literature differs from information?

Second, some moral dogmas cannot be applied across the board. We do not always want students to value the thinking and language of others. I doubt that any educators want students to value the thinking of a Timothy McVeigh, Lyndon LaRouche, or Louis Farrakhan, for example.

Third, the fashionable social generalizations asserted in the standards are usually only half-truths if not altogether false. Is it true that all dialects communicate complex ideas in mathematics and physics equally well, for example? There is some evidence to the contrary for mathematical concepts. And are not religious ceremonies and ways of living, eating, and dancing also "primary means by which culture is transmitted?" And cannot multiple interpretations result from deliberate ambiguity or subconscious conflict on the author's part?

The point is not that the moral impulses generating many of these dogmatic assertions are unworthy; rather, we need to be concerned about turning teachers into preachers and using public-school classrooms as Sunday Schools. Teachers charged with teaching moral or social dogmas are apt to use a great deal of academic time for this purpose; they are also apt to inhibit open and civil discussions of the social issues from which the dogmas have sprung.

Criterion 7: In a number of documents, it is possible to discern an effort to favor one particular approach on a pedagogical issue. Sometimes it is a process approach to writing, sometimes a reader response approach to literature, and sometimes a whole language approach to beginning reading and writing. Eight states are fairly heavy-handed about the pedagogy they want teachers to use. Ohio makes no bones that teachers are to use a whole language approach. Idaho offers a series of "position statements" in its document that at first seem to suggest that such skills as grammar, handwriting, phonics, spelling, and vocabulary should be systematically and directly taught. But Idaho quickly explains in each case that teachers do not need separate texts for teaching these skills or for even basic reading instruction if they teach these skills in an integrated manner from the literature students read and from the students' own writing. The clear implication in these statements is that teaching skills in an integrated manner is what is really desired (even though there is no body of research to support this advice).

Many documents promote other pedagogical practices that have little or no solid support in research. Ohio and Idaho strongly promote heterogeneous grouping at all grades, as if there were a clear and large body of evidence showing that all students gain from it; in fact, there is no body of evidence in favor of heterogeneous grouping as a replacement for honors and advanced placement courses in the high school. New Jersey and Texas promote collaborative writing as if there were evidence supporting its efficacy. A number of states (Texas, Minnesota, and Ohio, for example) try to prevent teachers from engaging students in systematic word study by inhibiting the use of noncontextual approaches to vocabulary study, insisting that students are to increase their reading vocabularies by using context clues and dictionaries only.

The Massachusetts approach to pedagogy in its standards document may provide a helpful model. In its introductory material, it states that "no one instructional approach can meet all the needs of each learner." It invites teachers to "explore the strengths of multiple approaches to instruction" and makes clear that it "does not intend to promote one approach over others." It goes on to say that "teachers should judge when it is best to use direct instruction, inductive learning, Socratic dialogue, or formal lecture" or "when it is appropriate for students to work individually, in small groups, or as a whole class." It concludes by noting that these decisions should be based on the teacher's "careful assessment of students' knowledge, interests, and skills." The *Boston Globe* found this paragraph worth quoting almost in its entirety in its laudatory editorial on the standards document.

F. Summary of the Section Totals

Table 6 shows the summary of the section totals. The first four sections (A, B, C, and D) have been summed for a preliminary set of totals. Fourteen states have preliminary totals at or above the mean of 60 points: Arizona, Delaware, Georgia, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. The totals for section E, which consists of negative criteria, are shown in the sixth row and subtracted from the preliminary set of totals for the final sum. They are subtracted because they are negative in their implications for learning. After the subtraction of the totals for section E from the preliminary totals, only 10 states still have a final sum of 60 points or more: they are Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin. And New York and Texas barely survive this subtraction process. Overall, only Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Virginia might be considered to have the strongest set of standards because their final sums are well above 60. But caution is in order; none builds any required readings or specific literary titles into its standards to make clear the level of difficulty and the body of literary and cultural knowledge that will be assessed at each educational level. And each has other limitations in its current set of standards, although the limitations differ across the documents.

VII. A Comparison with the AFT Report

Table 6. Summary Table*

	AL	AZ	CO	DE	FL	GA	HI	ID	IL	IN	KS	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO	NH	NJ	NY	OH	OK	OR	TN	TX	UT	VA	WA	WI	28 State Mean**
Totals for Section A: Purposes and Expectations	22	19	16	19	19	22	22	18	29	15	7	29	13	19	20	23	29	4	24	13	24	16	19	18	16	29	17	18	**19**
Totals for Section B: Organization of Standards	8	12	11	12	12	8	9	5	12	7	8	11	6	11	6	6	7	5	9	11	8	12	8	12	9	12	12	12	**9**
Totals for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage	15	22	15	14	21	25	8	8	24	8	6	25	14	9	17	11	18	5	18	21	16	6	9	20	22	20	19	25	**16**
Totals for Section D: Quality of Standards	12	25	14	20	21	19	11	14	22	9	2	29	7	15	16	10	11	7	24	13	17	14	2	18	24	19	15	21	**15**
Totals for A, B, C, & D	57	78	56	65	73	74	50	45	87	39	23	94	40	54	59	50	65	21	75	58	65	48	38	68	71	80	63	76	**60**
Totals for Section E: Negative Criteria	7	1	12	14	14	1	9	13	3	4	14	0	13	11	8	12	10	18	15	12	2	5	2	7	7	0	13	10	**8**
Final Sum*	50	77	44	51	59	73	41	32	84	35	9	94	27	43	51	38	55	3	60	46	63	43	36	61	64	80	50	66	**51**
	AL	**AZ**	**CO**	**DE**	**FL**	**GA**	**HI**	**ID**	**IL**	**IN**	**KS**	**MA**	**MI**	**MN**	**MS**	**MO**	**NH**	**NJ**	**NY**	**OH**	**OK**	**OR**	**TN**	**TX**	**UT**	**VA**	**WA**	**WI**	**28 State Mean****

* The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E. The points for the negative criteria are subtracted from the totals for A, B, C, and D because they represent negative tendencies or features in a document, and by their very nature detract from or counter the academic or otherwise positive features in a document.

** Due to rounding in this column, sums and differences may vary by +/-1.

As noted in the introduction, one reason for rating the standards documents that had been judged to meet the AFT "common core" criterion in 1996 was to facilitate a comparison. How did documents judged to have the strongest set of standards according to my criteria compare to those rated in the 1996 AFT report? Based on the final sums, Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Virginia appear to have the highest expectations for a common core of academic knowledge and skills for their students. Of these five states, Massachusetts is the only one not among those meeting the AFT "common core" criterion in 1996. However, the document rated for Massachusetts was not the same draft examined for the AFT report. It had been completely revised and had become available only this year.

Of the 18 documents whose final sums are below 60, five of them—Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Oregon—were also judged in the AFT report as not meeting its "common core" criterion. Twelve others in this group of 18 had been judged to meet its "common core" criterion, which might be interpreted to mean that the standards I used were tougher. But that may be because I went into much more detail than the AFT report did. For its next report, I have been informed that the AFT is planning a more detailed analysis.

VIII. Two General Problems in the Standards Documents

Many of the documents discussed here have two general problems that deserve further comment. One is the completely unrealistic expectation that young students are capable of understanding not only the culture they live in but many different cultures in the world. Although it doesn't clarify how many, Ohio expects kindergartners to "recognize that there are different cultures and subcultures" and, by grade 2, to "identify customs and languages of cultures or subcultures" by listening to "literature and music of cultures." Texas expects students in grades 4 to 8 to recognize "distinctive and shared characteristics of cultures through wide reading." It doesn't suggest how many cultures, nor why this is relevant for middle-school students in an English class rather than for graduate students in an anthropology class. Idaho expects students in grade 5 to "demonstrate knowledge of individuals, cultures, and customs reflected in literature." Idaho doesn't suggest how many cultures its fifth graders should know, but Florida expects its high-school students to identify "universal themes prevalent in the literature of all cultures." In its resource guide, New York wants students to read biography so that they can "appreciate the contributions of all cultures." Mississippi—modestly—wants its twelfth graders to "gain understanding of the human condition in particular cultures and during specific literary periods," but it doesn't provide teachers with a clue as to what particular cultures.

Not only are most K-12 students incapable of developing an in-depth understanding of more than their own—American—culture in the English language-arts class, they are incapable of making the kind of cultural judgments seemingly expected of them in many documents by the requirement that they note how works "reflect their times and cultures." Florida, for example, wants students to know "how a piece of literature reflects the time period in which it was written." It will assess students in grades 3-5 on whether they know that "the attitudes and values that exist in a time period affect the works that are written during that time period." Ohio wants fourth graders to explain how "literature reflects various periods of time." But what ninth grader can explain how *Romeo and Juliet* reflects Shakespeare's times and culture? How does a short story by Edgar Allan Poe reflect its times and culture? What are the "times and culture" that *Of Mice and Men* reflects?

It usually takes a well-read graduate student if not literary scholar to suggest precisely how a literary work might be seen to reflect its times and culture. Most people know extremely little about any culture (including their own) in the broad meaning of the word until they have lived long enough to have read broadly and deeply about that culture. Moreover, it has long been clear from research that most children before grade 5 or 6 have a weak sense of historical time. I doubt that any thoughtful English language-arts teacher truly believes that her K-12 students can understand, in any insightful way, a variety of cultures in the world, although it is possible for high-school students who read a great deal to develop a beginning understanding of a few other cultures. The basic cause of this problem in the standards documents is most likely inept phrasing. Their next revisions should aim for more felicitous phrasing.

A few documents do state, in careful language, what one can legitimately expect experienced readers to do with a literary work. For example, Virginia expects high-school students to "describe connections between historical and cultural influences and literary selections" or to "relate literary works and authors to major themes and issues of their eras." This wording avoids presentism (judging the past by today's standards) or the subtle putdown in saying that a work reflects "its times," the implication being that it does not reflect the supposedly enlightened values of today. It also avoids the erroneous implication that there is a monolithic culture behind every literary work.

A second major problem is that attempts to teach students about the "nature of language"—beyond simple truisms (that it is a system of shared symbols, for example)—often end up stressing the variability and impermanence of the English language. Wisconsin wants students to explain how English "continues to change over time." Michigan wants students to learn "how features of English, such as language patterns and spelling, vary over time and from place to place." It also wants students to explore "how the same words can have different usages and meanings in different contexts, cultures, and communities." South Carolina wants high-school students to know not only that "language is dynamic and chang-

ing," but also that it "reflects its culture and times." Montana expects students to learn that "words and their meanings change over time and through usage," that "language is flexible," and that "people use different pronunciations and word choices to refer to the same objects and ideas." It even recommends that teachers invite "speakers from various cultures and ethnic backgrounds to emphasize differences in pronunciations and word meanings." Despite the apparently slippery nature of our language, Montana nevertheless wants its students to learn that "people gain their identity through their language." Kansas wants middle-school students to "recognize that part of the richness of language is that meaning varies depending on the experience of the audience." This piece of dogma is not even a truism. Nor does it make sense. The experience of the audience may affect the depth and breadth of meaning, but this relationship is not a part of the "richness of language."

There is, of course, some truth to most of these statements. Every language has changed over time, especially over periods of hundreds of years. Every serious student of the English language knows how it evolved from the time of *Beowulf* through the Norman invasion and later cultural influences in both its oral and written forms. It is true that new words are constantly being coined, by scientists and businesses in particular, and added to our lexicon. It is true that words from other languages regularly enter the language as they become known to large numbers of English speakers or writers. It is true that there are various oral dialects in English, reflecting regional, educational, and occupational differences. However, it is not true that the written form of English today is very different from what it was 100 years ago. It differs across this country and the rest of the world chiefly with respect to its pronunciation. And the English language is quite clearly a system capable of clear meaning and communication among people in every part of the world. It wouldn't function as an international language or as a language system at all if most of its words changed in meaning from day to day. No responsible document should convey the impression that both oral and written English come in an expanding variety of forms, changing from moment to moment, and that written English is in a constant state of flux. Again, what is needed in these standards documents is more careful language. In particular, document writers for K-12 standards need to control a subconscious tendency to exaggerate or oversimplify the salient features of long-known and unremarkable phenomena and to inflate their significance in the eyes of teachers and students.

IX. Concluding Remarks

A large number of states have mostly unmeasurable or barely measurable standards (12 documents were rated either 1 or 0)—that is, they do not lend themselves to observable qualitative judgments or quantitative measurement. This is not a good sign if these states are planning to use their standards for statewide assessments. Either these states will be selective and not assess many, if not most, of the standards they display in their documents (there are always some assessable standards), or they will encounter many difficulties in trying to make them measurable. Further, they will be forced into a form of "measurement" that tells them nothing they really want to know. It is not clear why so many standards are written in a form that makes them virtually unmeasurable; presumably each document must have been reviewed by hundreds of teachers and administrators in a state, not to mention staff members in the state's own department of education and its own state board members. In some cases, the presence of unmeasurable standards may be deliberate; there are many educators and educational organizations opposed to standards altogether. Creating unmeasurable standards is a way to make standards virtually toothless. But how did so many unmeasurable standards get by state board members, legislators, journalists, and the many thousands of other educated citizens who must have reviewed them?

It is important to note that 9 documents are rated only "to some extent" (1 out of 4) in the critical area of reading, the most basic subject in the entire school curriculum. Reading standards that do not address all aspects of reading and that do not make high demands for the development of reading skills at all educational levels provide an awfully good explanation for the decline in reading scores in this country over the past decade.

The omission of vocabulary development as a reading skill, or the mandating of a narrow or inadequate approach to it, is another serious matter. The central role of vocabulary knowledge in the development of reading ability has been documented in educational research in this country for almost 100 years. There are many ways of engaging students in systematic word study that are appealing as well as intellectually beneficial. And these various techniques need to be reintroduced into the schools with some urgency. There can be no well-grounded expectations for raising academic achievement in this country until this key indicator of intellectual growth is more adequately addressed in all school curricula, standards documents, assessments, and the reading series that school systems purchase for reading instruction in grades K-8.

Although each state could have easily spelled out a few suggested titles to indicate the level of difficulty it expects at each educational level (because a suggested title is not a mandated title), only eight of the 28 documents accompanied their standards with a group of specific titles (in two cases, with only a few) in order to illustrate the level of reading difficulty they hope students will achieve and demonstrate. States other than these eight are aware that reading and literature standards are ultimately not very meaningful without recognizable literary titles and reading levels attached to them. Delaware regularly indicates that its students are to demonstrate understanding of reading materials "using appropriate texts." But it did not provide examples of appro-

priate texts at any grade level. Ohio even pooh-poohs the notion of reading lists or required works. A page is gratuitously inserted between the grade 11 and grade 12 curriculum objectives warning readers that one should beware of all reading lists because "some people or groups will inevitably try to mandate reading lists to 'fit' some particular political or social agenda." This admonition seems to assume that the absence of a list is not a reflection of a political or social agenda in itself.

A number of documents claim all decisions about the content of the literature curriculum should remain in the hands of local school districts. This position represents an abdication of professional responsibility for a state-sponsored standards document and misconceives what literacy ultimately means in any language. The small number of states that *suggest* examples of specific titles to indicate reading difficulty and cultural significance conveys the seriousness of the academic problem citizens face in trying to raise academic achievement throughout the country. If the citizens of the 50 states are to feel confident that high intellectual achievement will be expected in their statewide assessments and are to begin to regain confidence in their public schools, then the governors, legislators, state and local school-board members, and English language-arts teachers of all 50 states must responsibly address the task of developing core reading lists of titles and authors from which some selections are chosen each year for the statewide assessments at each educational level. Such lists can be socially inclusive yet respectful of the literary and civic heritage of an English-speaking people and of this country in particular, as are the lists in the Massachusetts document. What is required for the development of such lists are reasonable people who recognize the distinction between academic and social goals and have demonstrated in previous experiences a willingness to place the common good above individual and group interests.

Appendix A: Why These Criteria?

A. Purpose, audience, expectations and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** A document purporting to spell out what students should know and be able to do in the English language arts from kindergarten to grade 12 should, as a matter of principle, be written in a prose style that conveys respect for the English language and can be read by the general public. A document studded with academic or educational jargon will not be intelligible to the general public. Nor can it be reliably used as the basis for statewide assessments of students' knowledge and skills or for local curriculum development.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Standards documents need to make clear that English is the language expected for all academic activities in the English language-arts class and for achieving all English language-arts standards. They can do so by using the word "English" in the title of the document and by avoiding any implication in their introductory material or standards that other languages may or will be used in the English class as a matter of course or in any regular way. It is inappropriate for a document on standards for the English language arts to encourage or approve of the use of other languages in English language-arts classes. It is unfair to all students to use their time for instruction in the English language for other languages. Moreover, English language arts teachers are not equipped by training to promote or assess their students' use of other languages.

Clearly, common sense must guide classroom teachers when on occasion immigrant children fall back on words in their home languages because they cannot find the English equivalent. And schools and local communities might consider various options for parents who want their children to maintain use of their home language, e.g., voluntary after-school language programs or clubs, or true bilingual programs in which fully qualified teachers teach the language and literature of the home language in time blocks completely separated from the time blocks for English and other subjects that should be taught in English, such as science, mathematics, and American history.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** Standard English is the language of public communication in this country, for both writing and formal talk. Regardless of differences in pronunciation across English-speaking countries, standard English is also taught internationally for written work except for minor variations in spelling. Students should not be expected to abandon regional pronunciations or to use standard English in their informal talk in or outside school. But it is a responsibility of the schools to teach all students to use in their writing or formal talk those grammar and usage conventions included as part of "edited American English" for academic assignments, for worldwide employment opportunities, and for participation in the public life of this country.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** Almost every country in the world can point to distinctive works, authors, literary periods, and literary traditions of its own, in addition to key works or authors from other cultures that have influenced its own writers at some point in its history. Because this country has political institutions, traditions, beliefs, and values that differ in many ways from those of, say, Nigeria, Australia, Canada, or India, all of which use English as a national language, it is reasonable for an English language-arts standards document in this country, and for its literature standards in particular, to acknowledge the existence of a body of literary works specific to this country's intellectual and cultural history—i.e., American literature. It is a term that includes all the literature written in English by those born or living within the borders of the United States of America, regardless of the religious, ethnic, or racial background of the writers, and it is clearly understood by those who live elsewhere, such as in Canada, India, or Nigeria, as referring to such works.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** One traditional goal of an English language-arts curriculum in this country is to produce literate American citizens—citizens who have adequate language skills to participate meaningfully as speakers, readers, and writers in American civic life and who are capable of reading our seminal political documents as well as other historical and contemporary materials to inform their participation in this particular democracy. If students are to support our public schools and other public institutions when they become tax-paying adults, then English language-arts programs need to continue cultivating their civic identity—a sense of membership in their civic communities.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as use of meaningful reading materials.** The research evidence has been consistent for decades; most students need explicit and systematic instruction in decoding, or phonics, skills. A document needs to make clear that students can receive systematic instruction in decoding skills, followed up after each lesson by an opportunity to apply the skills they have just learned to whole words, alone and in chiefly decodable texts. It is not enough to give students instruction in just the letter-sound relationships that happen to be in the books they choose to read; this means that phonics skills will be taught haphazardly, not systematically. Nor is it enough to provide phonics instruction only in the context of a story they are reading; students need to practice applying decoding skills to isolated

decodable words and then to some texts with mostly decodable words so they learn how to identify words in context without having to be dependent on context clues. One major purpose of phonics instruction is precisely to reduce dependence on context clues for identifying unfamiliar words in print so that students can read faster and more fluently.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** The few academic hours students spend in school each day for 180 days per year are hardly sufficient for developing advanced reading and writing skills. All students should be expected to read regularly on their own, in and outside of school. They might also be given some guidance about how much they should read as a minimum and what its quality should be, although schools need to be flexible about specifying quantity because of the vast range in reading ability at every grade level, a range that widens through the grades.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** If citizens expect standards to help raise and equalize academic expectations for student achievement in their state, the standards need to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments. If states do not plan statewide assessments tailored to their standards (i.e., if they use only off-the-shelf tests), local schools will have no incentive to pay attention to the standards. If states do not plan any statewide assessments, then there is no incentive for them to word their standards in a way that is conducive to formal assessment.

B. Organization of the standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** The way in which standards are organized is often a function of the legislation that called them into being and the grade levels for which assessment is planned. Thus, a document cannot be faulted for not having grade-by-grade standards when they were not mandated by the legislature. There is also some difference of opinion about the usefulness of grade-by-grade standards in the English language arts at the state level. It is not easy to express the subtle differences in growth expected from year to year in the use of many language skills and processes. However, developmental standards in the English language arts are not very meaningful if they cover more than four grades.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** The organizing strands of a standards document should correspond to relevant areas of research and scholarship, some of which have histories going back hundreds if not thousands of years (e.g., the study of rhetoric or the art of effective communication, literary study, and study of the history and structure of various languages). More recent areas of research include reading and writing. A match of some kind facilitates local curriculum development and helps one determine if the standards cover all the areas that should be covered by the English language arts. Gaps in coverage may arise when a category bears little or no relationship to a recognized body of research or scholarship or when a coherent body of research or scholarship traditionally drawn on by the schools does not appear at all as a category or is split into two or more categories.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** When objectives under a general standard or category are haphazardly organized so that lower- and higher-level items are mixed together, it is difficult to discern whether all important aspects of that area have been covered. A haphazard organization may also convey the wrong message to teachers, curriculum developers, and those developing assessment instruments. By distinguishing important conceptual concerns such as a controlling idea, a focus, a hypothesis, or a thesis from such lower order skills as language conventions by means of separate subcategories, a document helps highlight those elements that more clearly reflect intellectual growth through the grades.

C. Disciplinary coverage of the standards:

English language-arts teachers typically address seven distinct areas of academic learning in their classrooms. Some may be combined in one category of standards, such as listening and speaking, but each area should be separately addressed in a subcategory when it is combined with others.

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** Students need skills for both formal and informal listening and speaking. Standards should expect students to learn how to participate in group discussions that have various purposes (such as discussing a literary work or brainstorming possible solutions to a school problem) and various rules (which are often determined by the age of the students and the purpose of the group). Participation in a group includes learning how to assume different roles in a discussion (such as moderator, recorder, or timekeeper, or speaker and listener), and learning to evaluate why some discussions are focused and productive while others are unfocused or unproductive. In addition, students should learn appropriate features of formal oral presentations and use one of the many sets of established criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech. It is also useful for students to develop and use peer-generated or personal criteria to evaluate individual or group talk.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades.**

They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes. Reading standards should address the development of all the major reading skills highlighted over the years in reading research. This includes the development of a reading vocabulary, the major component in reading comprehension, through systematic word study as well as through broad reading, listening, and dictionary use. Attention should be given to the use of various reading strategies (such as skimming, questioning, or determining the purpose of a selection), understanding of the various features of a text (such as its mode of organization, table of contents, or index), familiarity with different types of reading materials (such as newspapers or instructions for assembling an object), and an understanding of different purposes for reading (or viewing), such as entertainment or information-gathering.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and cultural significance.** Standards writers in the English language arts need to indicate the common core of literary knowledge they believe all students should gain from their study of literature; indeed, expectations for the content of students' literary knowledge should be as fleshed out as are expectations for the content of their history knowledge. Our national literature today is conceptualized in very broad terms, as it should be. But no matter how broadly it is conceived, educators have an obligation to offer intellectually and aesthetically defensible recommendations for some key authors, some key works, and major literary traditions and periods from the literary heritage of English-speaking people. By graduation, all students in an American high school should have read, for example, some selections by the major writers of the American Renaissance, some by the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, some from the Bible (as background to Western literature, as literature in its own right, and as the major source of literary allusion in Western literature), and some by major British writers in British literary history. They should also have read literary works in translation from many cultures around the world, past and present, especially works, such as those by the ancient Greeks and Romans, that greatly influenced literature later written in English. Names of some authors, works, and literary traditions or periods are just as necessary in English language-arts standards as are names of significant people and historical periods in history standards.

Full literacy is not just a matter of skills, processes, and strategies. Nor is it simply a matter of one's formal knowledge of genres or literary and rhetorical elements. A high level of literacy is ultimately dependent on some shared content and cannot be independent of the body of literature written in the language of the civic culture itself. Both literary appreciation and literary analysis in any society must be informed by knowledge of some of the key works, authors, and traditions that have contributed to the evolution of its literary culture. Students will understand contemporary literature in large part by understanding the influential literature that preceded it. Expectations for high levels of literacy cannot be meaningful if they are not embedded in a clear aesthetic and cultural context. Nor is a statewide assessment fair if all students have not had an opportunity to acquire a common framework for interpreting the literary culture of the country in which they live.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** All these components are considered essential elements in composition instruction, and each includes key concepts to be taught to students, such as a focus or controlling idea, coherence, or a logical relationship among ideas. It is appropriate to expect students to demonstrate the use of various writing processes, but standards must also address the qualities of the completed composition, evaluated according to prescribed criteria. It is useful for students to develop and use peer-generated or personal criteria through the grades to evaluate their own and others' writing, but they must become familiar with, use, respond to, and understand the rationale for prescribed criteria—the teacher's or those of an external committee of evaluators.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** Not every detail of usage or grammar needs mention in a standards document. But language conventions can be spelled out with a few different details at different educational levels to show what growth in using conventions means. It is possible to show increases in expectations in broad categories such as parts of speech, types of clauses, or various uses of the comma. With respect to penmanship, conventions do not refer to specific ways of forming letters, as there are several different penmanship systems used in schools across the country. They refer to accepted ways to distinguish upper-case from lower-case letters and to overall legibility.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** Knowledge of the

history of the English language has been a traditional component of the K-12 curriculum and is even more important today than it has been. Whether or not they are native speakers of English, all students should be expected to know something about the evolution and essential characteristics of the language they read, speak, and write. Standards should address the reasons for oral dialects of English and the relative uniformity of its written form throughout the world. They should also address the reasons why most societies (perhaps all) teach a standard form of their language for written use and for formal oral use.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** Standards for this area of learning may or may not be in a separate strand in a standards document. But whether they are in a research or media strand, or in the reading or writing strand, all students should be expected to be able to formulate suitable research questions for various areas of inquiry, acquire desired information independently, and evaluate its quality. Such abilities remain basic skills for informed citizenship. They should also be expected to know how to use the facilities of a public library and the services of its librarians.

D. Quality of the standards:

1. **They are clear.** Standards must be clear enough in meaning so that teachers and parents as well as those developing assessment instruments know what is intended by them. Such objectives as "identify within nonfiction texts the difference between facts and opinions" or "effectively use the appropriate reference sources and materials necessary for gathering information" are clear—and assessable. In contrast, such objectives as "examine stereotypes and mind sets, including gender, through literature," "examine global issues, including tolerance, through writing activities," "write to broaden awareness of cultural perspectives," and "integrate reading with speaking, listening, viewing, and writing experiences" are not. It is not obvious what a "mind set" is, never mind a "gender mind set." Nor is it clear how one can "examine" a global issue through writing; one normally examines an issue by reading about it, viewing material on it, or talking to someone about it. Nor is it clear how one broadens awareness of "cultural perspectives" by writing rather than reading about a "cultural perspective," whatever that is. The last example is indecipherable.

2. **They are specific.** Specificity refers to the level of detail in a standard or objective. A standard can be so general or abstract that it does not restrict the choice of content sufficiently to ensure a comparable core of learning across classrooms. In other words, it permits an unlimited number of interpretations of what is intended. An objective that is too general is "select reading materials for a variety of purposes." A specific standard indicates content of some kind and an intellectual activity that engages with or focuses on it to facilitate its learning, such as "identify and interpret figurative language and literary devices (e.g., simile, metaphor, allusion)."

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** Standards may be clear and specific but not measurable. For example, the expectation that students create an artistic interpretation of a literary work is clear and specific. But it is not measurable; it is not clear what an artistic interpretation consists of. If standards are not susceptible of measurement or judgment by experienced raters, then they are not standards. To be measurable, English language-arts standards ought to contain such verbs as "identify," "explain," "describe," "support," "present," "organize," "analyze," "evaluate," "use," "compare," "distinguish," "show," "interpret," or "apply." These kinds of verbs result in the manipulation of some body of ideas—results that can be observed and therefore measured or judged. Standards with verbs such as "recognize that," "respect," or "value" do not lead to the observable manipulation of ideas and are unlikely to be measurable. Standards that focus on the use of strategies or processes, rather than on their effects on intellectual content (or without any connection to what happens to the content), are also unlikely to be measurable.

4. **They are comprehensive.** Standards may be clear, specific, and measurable, but not comprehensive. Standards should address all seven areas in the English language arts and all the important indices of learning in each area.

5. **They are demanding.** Standards can be clear, specific, measurable, and comprehensive, but not demanding. For standards in an English language arts document to be judged demanding, they must require the use of thinking processes that are appropriately challenging at each educational level, indicate important features to be demonstrated at each level, and show increasing intellectual or cognitive expectations at each higher level.

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** In part, an increase in difficulty can be achieved by a progression from such verbs as "describe," "use," or "identify" in the elementary grades to such verbs as "analyze," "explain," "interpret," "synthesize," "evaluate," and "apply" in the secondary grades. In part, it can be achieved by mention of some of the details that reflect increasing difficulty: e.g., from knowledge of such literary elements as plot, character, and setting in the elementary grades to such sophisticated elements as foreshadowing, symbolism, and literary allusions in higher grades. For

reading and literature standards, specific reading levels or well-known titles need to be part of at least one standard so that the level of difficulty expected is clear.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** If a standards document in the English language arts is to have real meaning, it must make clear what growth in reading means over the grades. For example, a document may indicate the reading level expected for achieving its reading standards by providing examples of well-known works for each reading standard. It may also offer sample passages showing the reading levels expected for specific educational levels.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples.** Writing samples at different educational levels can indicate the quality of the writing expected at each level. Without writing samples for each educational level, it is not clear what the expectations for growth in writing are, especially by grade 12.

d. **For other subdisciplines, the document provides examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** Standards documents should try to provide examples of an assignment or activity that facilitates or reflects the kind of learning embodied in its standards. It is a useful practice. In attempting to devise a good example of a relevant classroom activity or assignment, document writers can more easily discern non-assessable, unclear, or age-inappropriate objectives.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** One purpose of statewide standards is to ensure that the academic demands of local school curricula are similar enough and high enough at each educational level to assure all students in the state of equally high expectations. The academic demands of local school curricula must rest on some common subject matter in every subject assessed by the state if statewide standards and assessments are to be meaningful. Statewide standards must also be pegged to specific levels of reading difficulty and writing skill at each of the educational levels assessed. Unless they contain some specific expectations about the content students are to read (or be otherwise exposed to) over the grades, state-sponsored standards cannot ensure that all students will bring comparable backgrounds in literary and academic knowledge to statewide assessments. Local school districts are expected to go far beyond the standards set forth in a state-sponsored document in fleshing out a complete curriculum for all their students. Nevertheless, the states must point to a common core of knowledge and abilities through their standards if they are to assess academic achievement in a meaningful way and fulfill their legislative mandates.

E. Anti-Literary or Anti-Academic Requirements or Expectations:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** The notion prevalent in many curriculum materials today is that a culture is a monolithic—and idiosyncratic—entity, that is, that those people who can be identified as members of a particular culture share common perspectives, points of view, and values on most intellectual and social issues, and that each culture has a set of perspectives, points of view, and values that differ from those of all other cultures. The idea that a culture is a monolithic entity is implicit in the common belief that even young students can learn the essential features of a culture by reading a few works by an author or two in that culture. This belief makes sense only if it is assumed that these one or two works of necessity reflect all the features and values of the author's culture. This belief can be discerned in the very language used to encourage diversity in literature programs. Many well-intentioned educators (and standards documents) want students to read works that "represent" various cultures, implying that even one work by, say, a nineteenth-century French author somehow reflects the essential characteristics of French culture at that time. It has long been recognized that individual works will shed some light on some of the intellectual and social currents in a particular culture and give some insights into it. But no responsible scholar has ever claimed that any work or author can "represent" a culture. "Representation" is a concept from political science that has been misapplied to literary works. It is not possible to view even the works of writers who wrote within a half century of each other in America, such as Mark Twain, Henry James, Willa Cather, and Scott Fitzgerald, as expressing a unitary cultural perspective. They may exhibit some common traits, but they also exhibit many different and contradictory ones. Such language encourages a reductive, simplistic, or stereotyped view of a literary culture. What is desirable is to encourage students to read works from a variety of cultures and to construct literature programs in a way that enables students to see that different authors in a culture usually make different comments about the human experience through their work. In other words, the complexity of most cultures is what K-12 educators need to begin to introduce to their students.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** Literary study today suffers from the frequent injunction to students to respond to or interpret what they read in light of their personal experiences. A reader-response approach applied with a heavy hand encourages them to bring ready-made and often irrelevant associations to their reading, seriously interfering with an adequate interpretation of what they read. It is not what was intended in the work of Louise Rosenblatt, a literary scholar who expected students to bring their personal

experiences to their initial responses to a literary work (and wanted educators to allow them to do so), but never suggested that they be required to do so. Students should, of course, be allowed to bring their personal experiences to their initial responses to a literary work, and on occasion they might well be invited to compare the experiences of a literary character with their own. Where it is appropriate, teachers should help students make connections with a literary work. And when a student interprets a literary work in a way that seems too idiosyncratic, the teacher should first explore, not reject the interpretation out of hand. But it is inappropriate as a requirement in a standard.

There are several dangers in requiring students to read their personal worlds into what they are asked to read. First, it promotes self-centered thinking. It goes against the workings of the imagination and reduces the capacity of good literature to help students experience the writer's created world. Worse yet, it limits their capacity to understand abstract concepts from more analytic or distanced perspectives. Finally, it may lead to a narrow literature curriculum. Since it is not easy for students to read their lives into such older works as *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Odyssey*, or *Crime and Punishment*, or such fantasies as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, or *Mary Poppins*, the practical effect of this limited vision of how students should respond to a literary work is to restrict the literature taught in the elementary grades to contemporary realistic fiction, and in high school to "young adult" literature or works that deal with contemporary social problems.

3. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of the logic, accuracy, and adequacy of the supporting evidence.** The notion that any text is susceptible of many interpretations is very trendy in the academic world today, usually marching under the banner of "constructivism"—the idea that all knowledge is socially constructed and depends on one's "perspective," "point of view," or "discourse community." In its extreme form, any personal response to a text can be considered valid simply because it was made (even if it was based on a complete misunderstanding of the text). Although this relativistic notion is sometimes applied across the board to all kinds of texts, implying that even the label on a medicine bottle may have different but legitimate interpretations, it tends to show up chiefly in the study of literature. The notion is, of course, based on some sensible observations. Literary works, in particular, may be susceptible of more than one valid interpretation, frequently because of authorial ambiguity. Thus, it is important that teachers consider a range of initial responses to a literary work. But to be considered valid, the responses must be shown to be consistent with what the author has written.

If the idea that different interpretations of a text are possible is introduced in a standards document, it needs to be presented carefully. First of all, the concept is best linked to the study of literature and to the concept of ambiguity, often deliberate on the author's part. There should also be caveats to the effect that the validity of any literary interpretation depends on the quality and weight of the evidence cited, and that different interpretations cannot be equally valid if the quality and weight of the evidence brought to bear on them differ. If the idea is connected to non-literary writing, and it often is today with respect to "multiple perspectives" on historical events or political issues in particular, then the accuracy, completeness of information, and logic of the reasoning supporting a "perspective" or "point of view" are qualifying conditions that must be considered.

4. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** The deleterious influence of the social sciences on literary study is apparent in college literature courses and in much of the professional literature for teachers today. K-12 literature teachers are regularly advised to select the works they ask their students to read for their relevance to social issues. But it is inappropriate to make literary study a handmaiden to the social sciences for a number of reasons. When the choice of literary work is guided by the hot-button issues of the day, the literary work selected may be studied more as a social documentary than as a literary work. The literary problem is that the aesthetic elements of the work may be given short shrift or ignored altogether. The academic problem is that by its very nature a literary work is not an accurate or reliable source of information about a social issue. The curricular problem is that the effort to select literary works addressing social issues tends to eliminate from the curriculum literary works that do not address these hot-button social issues. The use of such narrow selection criteria also has a tendency to "dumb down" the level of what students are reading. Teachers cannot always find a suitably challenging literary work on the social issue they have decided should be addressed. Or they find that the good literature already in their classroom closet does not address the social issue in a politically correct way. As a result, they resort to works of lower intellectual and literary quality (such as adolescent or young-adult literature at the high-school level) in order to address the social issue with the "right" spin on it.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** Examples of classroom activities show exactly what learning is intended by a particular standard or what kind of activity may lead to that learning. They clarify the educational philosophy guiding the document and often suggest to teachers the kind of pedagogy its writers wish to promote. A document that features an unsound classroom activity or a piece of student writing with blatantly politicized content serves to promote the activity, writing assignment, or politicized content as acceptable if not desirable.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** Standards are benchmarks for what we want students to know and be able to do. In English language-arts and reading classes, standards are supposed to embed academic teachings. They are not supposed to embed moral teachings, which are appropriate in religion classes. Nor are standards supposed to be sociological generalizations or conclusions for students to internalize and regurgitate. The inherent problem with standards that are nothing more than moral dogmas is that they are unassessable; how can we really know from an assessment what a student's moral values are and how sincerely they are held. The intellectual problem with standards that express sociological generalizations is that most such generalizations are reductive assertions about complex phenomena and have many exceptions. In addition, they are the fruits of independent study and critical thinking and require evidence for support. To ask students to learn them as facts is to bypass the entire academic process on which they should be based.

7. **The document recommends, explicitly or implicitly, one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** No one instructional approach can work with all students, or with all students all the time. A standards document should allow well-trained teachers to use their professional judgment and their understanding of educational research in addressing pedagogical issues. A standards document that attempts to mandate only one approach to a particular pedagogical issue, or to exclude others, has gone beyond its mandate and undermines good teaching. For example, not all students need systematic phonics instruction. But we do know from research of the past five decades or more that most students benefit from it, especially less-able readers, and teachers should not be prevented from providing it for them.

Appendix B: How Good Standards Differ from Those Needing Improvement

Differences between Clear and Relatively Demanding Standards and Those That Are Not

To show what a subset of good standards look like, this appendix offers a comparison of two analogous subsets of objectives. In each pair, one set is good, the other needs improvement. The first set compares objectives in reading for information. The performance indicators for New York's standard "Language for Information and Understanding" illustrate clear, relatively specific, measurable, and relatively demanding standards. They also show clear increases in intellectual complexity. The general performance standard notes: "Listening and reading to acquire information and understanding involves collecting data, facts, and ideas, discovering relationships, concepts, and generalizations, and using knowledge from oral, written, and electronic sources."

For performance indicators, New York elementary-school students will (1) "gather and interpret information from children's reference books, magazines, textbooks, electronic bulletin boards, audio and media presentations, oral interviews, and from such forms as charts, graphs, maps, and diagrams; (2) select information appropriate to the purpose of their investigation and relate ideas from one text to another; (3) select and use strategies they have been taught for note-taking, organizing, and categorizing information; (4) ask specific questions to clarify and extend meaning; (5) make appropriate and effective use of strategies to construct meaning from print, such as prior knowledge about a subject, structural and context clues, and an understanding of letter-sound relationships to decode difficult words; and (6) support inferences about information and ideas with reference to text features, such as vocabulary and organizational patterns."

New York "intermediate" students will (1) "interpret and analyze information from textbooks and nonfiction books for young adults, as well as reference materials, audio and media presentations, oral interviews, graphs, charts, diagrams, and electronic data bases intended for a general audience; (2) compare and synthesize information from different sources; (3) use a wide variety of strategies for selecting, organizing, and categorizing information; (4) distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information and between fact and opinion; (5) relate new information to prior knowledge and experience; and (6) understand and use the text features that make information accessible and usable, such as format, sequence, level of diction, and relevance of details."

New York "commencement" students will (1) "interpret and analyze complex informational texts and presentations, including technical manuals, professional journals, newspaper and broadcast editorials, electronic networks, political speeches and debates, and primary source material in their subject area courses; (2) synthesize information from diverse sources and identify complexities and discrepancies in the information; (3) use a combination of techniques (e.g., previewing, use of advance organizers, structural cues) to extract salient information from texts; (4) make distinctions about the relative value and significance of specific data, facts, and ideas; (5) make perceptive and well developed connections to prior knowledge; and (6) evaluate writing strategies and presentational features that affect interpretation of the information."

In contrast, Kansas offers the following "benchmarks" for the standard that "learners will demonstrate skills in reading for a variety of purposes." Its elementary-school students will (1) "develop a variety of reading and organizational strategies to gain meaning, such as prior knowledge, word recognition, word meaning, inferencing and text structure; (2) identify the reader's purposes for reading; (3) comprehend extended passages of technical, exposition, persuasion and complete episodes of narration, (4) reflect on and interpret what is read; (5) critically analyze and evaluate information and messages presented through print; (6) identify their own purposes for reading; and (7) describe their attitudes toward what they are reading and the effect these attitudes have on their purposes."

Kansas middle-school students will (1) "increase their skills using a variety of reading and organizational strategies to gain meaning, such as prior knowledge, word recognition, word meaning, inferencing and text structure; (2) adjust reading depending on purpose and reading material; (3) comprehend and summarize extended passages of technical, exposition, persuasion and complete episodes of narration; (4) reflect on, interpret and evaluate what is read; (5) interpret and critique with increasing sophistication information and messages presented through print; (6) identify a variety of purposes for reading; and (7) describe their attitudes toward what they are reading and the effect these attitudes have on their purposes."

Kansas high-school students will (1) "apply a variety of reading and organizational strategies to gain meaning, such as prior knowledge, word recognition, word meaning, inferencing and text structure; (2) demonstrate that reading is a process that varies with the material to be read, the reader's purpose and the difficulty levels of the material; (3) comprehend, summarize and analyze extended passages of technical, exposition, persuasion and complete episodes of narration; (4) reflect on, interpret and evaluate what is read; (5) critically analyze and evaluate information presented through print and consider the truth or fallacy of what they read; (6) identify and evaluate a variety of purposes for reading; and (7) describe their attitudes toward what they are reading and the effect these attitudes have on their purposes."

Of all Kansas's standards on reading, only two or three are assessable at each educational level (e.g., "comprehend and summarize extended passages"). Some point to unmeasurable

processes (e.g., develop, use, or apply "a variety of reading and organizational strategies"). Some are too general (e.g., "reflect on, interpret and evaluate what is read"). Some point to attitudes known only, if at all, to the student (e.g., "describe their attitudes toward what they are reading"). Some are purely idiosyncratic and cannot be measured against any criterion (e.g., "identify their own purposes for reading") or make no sense (e.g., "identify and evaluate a variety of purposes for reading"). There is little if any difference in academic expectation in most standards through the grades. And missing are many important intellectual processes described in detail in New York's standards, although both fail to expect the development of an advanced reading vocabulary through a systematic study of words in or outside of their reading material.

Differences between Specific and Non-Specific Standards

The second pair contrasts standards in reading for middle-grade students to show the differences between specific and non-specific objectives. Under the general standard that "students will construct, examine, and extend the meaning of literary, informative, and technical texts through listening, reading and viewing," Delaware expects students by the completion of grade 8, "using appropriate text," to be able to (1) "select and apply efficient, effective decoding and other word recognition strategies to comprehend printed texts; (2) develop an increasingly extensive vocabulary and actively seek the meaning of unknown words as an important facet of comprehending texts and messages by a) using context cues to determine the meanings of words and b) using reference works, technology and human resources to learn the meaning of unknown words (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus, computer software); (3) self-monitor comprehension while listening, reading, and viewing by a) generating a purpose for reading, listening, or viewing, b) assimilating information with prior knowledge to revise predictions and understandings, and to make inferences, c) taking appropriate actions (e.g., rereading to make sense, adjusting rate of reading, seeking the meaning of unknown vocabulary) to enhance understanding of oral and written text; and (4) demonstrate an overall understanding of oral and printed texts by a) making and revising predictions as needed, b) identifying the story elements (e.g., characters, setting, plot), c) identifying and interpreting figurative language and literary devices (e.g., simile, metaphor, allusion), d) retelling a story or restating an informative text through speaking and/or writing, e) organizing the important points of the text via summaries, outlines, and/or graphic organizers; f) identifying the author's purpose, g) comparing information between and within text, h) discriminating between fact and opinion, i) drawing conclusions, j) accepting or rejecting the validity of the information and giving supporting evidence, and k) relating the content of the text to real-life situations."

In contrast, under the content standard for reading for grades 6 to 8 (the closest analogy in its document to the Delaware standard), Tennessee offers these "learning expectations." Students are to (1) "develop an understanding of and respect for multicultural, gender, and ethnic diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects; (2) discern reading strategies appropriate to text; (3) extend reading vocabulary using contextual and reference skills; (3) use comprehension strategies to enhance understanding, to make predictions, and to respond to literature; (4) improve comprehension by interpreting, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating written texts; (5) read orally to develop fluency, expression, accuracy, and confidence; (6) select reading materials for a variety of purposes; (7) use cognitive strategies to evaluate text critically; (8) recognize biases and persuasive devices found in various texts; (9) select, evaluate, and utilize resource material in order to apply it effectively; (10) identify literary genres; and (11) identify and interpret literary elements and figurative language."

The language in the Tennessee document is reasonably clear, but its expectations do not come close to the specificity shown in comparable objectives in the Delaware document. For example, it seeks to extend vocabulary, but fails to specify the reference skills it wants students to learn. Nor does it indicate what literary elements and figures of speech grade 8 students should know. Even an expectation like (8), which is not in the Delaware document, is vague; in what kinds of texts does it want students to hunt for bias or persuasive devices? Overall, Tennessee's standards in reading at these grade levels are intellectually impoverished, not completely academic in nature, and only occasionally measurable. They also do a great disservice to literary study.

Appendix C: New Standards

Date of draft examined: 1997

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Yes. There is nothing to indicate otherwise.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** Yes. Conventions of the English language are expected in both writing and formal oral presentations from the elementary school on.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** No. No particular bodies of literature are specified in the performance standards or the introductory material for them.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** For the most part. There is a heavy emphasis on "active citizenship" by means of the reading of "public documents," public speaking, observations, and writing. But there is nothing to suggest that students are to see themselves participating as American citizens.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Unclear. The performance standards for the elementary school simply indicate that students are to use a "range of cueing systems, e.g., phonics and context clues, to determine pronunciation and meanings."

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades and suggests how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** Yes. This is an explicit standard. Students are to read "at least twenty-five books or book equivalents each year." A sample reading list is provided at all three educational levels. The lists suggest the quality and complexity of the materials to be read at each level. The document also notes that "any or all of the specific works on the list may be substituted with other works providing the works that are substituted are of comparable quality and complexity to those that are replaced."

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. The standards are presented in three clusters: elementary, middle, and high school.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** Yes. They are organized into five categories for the elementary and middle grades: reading; writing; speaking, listening, and viewing; conventions, grammar, and usage of the English language; and literature. At the high school level, two standards are added: the reading and composing of public documents and the reading and composing of functional documents.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** Yes. The subcategories in each category are clearly and consistently conceptualized.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** For the most part. Skills in listening and speaking are covered in great detail. They address listening and speaking in one-to-one conferences with an adult as well as group interaction and individual presentation. However, the standards do not include the use of established as well as peer-generated criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech. The development of peer-generated criteria for group discussion is suggested as a class activity only.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** To some extent. The skills for reading and comprehending books and informational materials are addressed over the grades, but with almost the same details in their standards. Moreover, the standards for comprehension and informational reading tend to be holistic in their nature (e.g., "makes and supports warranted and responsible assertions about the texts"). There are no details in these standards referring to such skills as understanding various text features or organizational structures. The major increases in academic expectations are expressed by the demands of the examples offered for each type of reading task and by the addition of new types of reading tasks in the middle and high school. For the middle school, standards for reading functional and public documents are added. Interestingly, there are clear differences between the middle school and the high school in the standards for reading public and functional documents, and in the high school they are pulled out of the reading strand and set up in separate categories, implying that teachers should give more at-

tention to these kinds of reading tasks than to strictly informational reading. However, no standard in any way touches upon the development of a reading vocabulary. Nor is the development or evidence of an increasing speaking or writing vocabulary mentioned in performance standards elsewhere in these strands.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and cultural significance.** To some extent. The standards expect understanding of a variety of literary genres and elements. However, they do not suggest the use of different interpretive lenses or offer any literary specifics in the standards. New Standards is to be commended for providing a suggested list of works at each educational level, for which substitutes can be made. But the lists of suggested titles from which students may choose 25 works to read provide a shaky basis for a sound and comprehensive literature program. For example, the elementary-school list seems more geared to the interests of girls than boys, who are apt to be less motivated readers than young girls. The middle-school list seems to contain few demanding works for students in grades 7 and 8 and seems more geared to the upper elementary grades. The high-school list contains a large number of demanding or high-quality works for grades 9-12, but except for a few works by Shakespeare, there is no British literature from before mid-twentieth century for grades 9-12. And one work on this list, *Farewell to Manzanar*, is an extremely mediocre work of literature frequently taught in the middle grades. To substitute works of "equivalent quality" for that work wouldn't do much for the cause of quality.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** To some extent. The standards express reasonable expectations for report writing, response to literature, narratives, narrative procedures, persuasive essays (in the middle and high school), and reflective essays (in high school). However, most of the standards are the same for all three educational levels, differing chiefly (but not always) in the examples offered for each type of writing. There is no mention of such concepts as coherence, topic sentences, transition devices, or appropriate diction. Although the strength of the New Standards writing standards lies in spelling out several different types of writing and the features that can be expected for each type, there is no mention in the standards of students using established evaluation criteria. Moreover, for public documents, the standards seem to point chiefly to public-policy formulation and advocacy writing. Development of a serious proposal for changing existing public policy might be suitable as part of a demanding course in U.S. government taught by a knowledgeable social-science teacher to students willing to engage in extensive reading and interviewing. But it is doubtful that serious public-policy writing can be easily taught—or evaluated—by the typical English teacher. It is also doubtful whether English teachers should be encouraged to prime students for what appears to be unprincipled political rhetoric. In critiquing public documents, students are, among other things, to note the "use of the power of anecdote," "anticipation of counter-claims," and "use of emotionally laden words and imagery." Then in their writing, they are, among other things, to exhibit "an awareness of ... the power of imagery and/or anecdote," recognize "arguments based on appealing to a reader's emotions," and use a "range of strategies to appeal to readers." There is no suggestion that they should be constrained to ethical or truthful arguments. Nor is there any example suggesting that students ought to be able, first, to read our seminal historical public documents and show how the salient aspects of whatever contemporary social and political issues they analyze reflect or violate our basic political principles, procedures, and processes—and then demonstrate reference to them in their public writing.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** To some extent. The standards expect students to demonstrate use of oral and written language conventions. But no specifics are ever offered at any grade level.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. There is nothing in the standards to address any of these topics.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** To some extent. The standards expect information-gathering, but they do not specify the various processes students must engage in to do open-ended research or the need to draw on various sources of information and various methodologies. Nor do they mention anywhere the need to evaluate the validity of information obtained from various media or technology resources. There is nothing on the development of good, open-ended research questions, evaluation of

different sources of information, and the drawing of logical conclusions from data gathered, even by the high-school grades. For the high school, the research reports exemplified are the "I-search essay" (a very personalized account of research) and a "saturation report," seemingly not much more than a collection of a large amount of information on a topic.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** Yes. They are all free from jargon and clear in meaning.

2. **They are specific.** Yes.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** Yes, they are measurable and can lead to comparable results across schools.

4. **They are comprehensive.** To some extent. See the gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**
a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** To some extent. For the most part, the clusters of standards for particular types of reading or writing tasks do not in themselves show much increase, if any, in difficulty over the grades. For example, the standards for reading and comprehending books and informational material are identical at all three educational levels. For report writing, the only difference across levels lies in the specification of a few more strategies that students might use in middle- and high-school performance compared to elementary-school performance. Similarly, for participation in groups, the only difference between the standards for the elementary grades and those for the middle grades is the one new standard added for the middle grades ("employs a group decision-making technique such as brainstorming or a problem-solving sequence"). In the high school, one more standard has been added to these ("divides labor so as to achieve the overall group goal efficiently"). What do change from level to level, and provide the increase in difficulty (but only to some extent), are (1) the types of tasks added in each area and (2) the examples of activities for each set of standards.

For example, in the middle school, students are to acquire familiarity with a variety of functional documents and with "documents" that focus on political issues or "matters of public policy." The standards for the latter show a clear increase in difficulty over those in the elementary level; the middle-grade student "identifies the author's purpose and stance," "identifies the social context of the document," "examines or makes use of the appeal of a document to audiences both friendly and hostile to the position presented," "identifies or uses commonly used persuasive techniques," and "analyzes the arguments and positions advanced and the evidence offered in support of them, or formulates an argument and offers evidence to support it." This is pretty sophisticated stuff for grade 8 students to have mastered. But the high-school reading standards for public documents are not inherently more intellectually demanding or broadening; at this level, the student simply continues to focus on the strategies "common in public discourse" such as "effective use of argument," "use of the power of anecdote," anticipation of counter-claims," "use of emotionally laden words and imagery," "appeal to audiences both friendly and hostile to the position presented," and "citing of appropriate references or authorities." On the other hand, what does increase in difficulty are the sample activities, which suggest rather sophisticated if narrow tasks: for example, the student "examines campaign literature to determine underlying assumptions" and "examines a range of articles published in a magazine or newspaper and draws inferences about the political stance of the magazine or newspaper." (One wonders to what extent teachers will "help" their students understand campaign assumptions or how to label political stances.)

The high-school standards seem to have a narrow focus in this area. It seems that high-school students are to focus while reading on the techniques used in contemporary advocacy writing so that they can use them in their own writing (see C.4 above for further details). And in the sample activities, the emphasis is clearly on proposing or changing public "policy." (This might be interpreted as teaching students to "make demands.") The future "citizen" who is being trained by these standards may be very active, but it is not at all clear that the citizen will be terribly well-informed about the background of any of the issues for which he formulates and advocates policies. Indeed, in the high-school speaking standard, the student is expected both to "shape information to achieve a particular purpose and to appeal to the interests and background knowledge of audience members" and to "shape content and organization according to criteria for importance and impact rather than according to availability of information in resource materials." Not even a hint in these standards about the need to gather multiple perspectives on a topic to understand all points of view. The message is clear. It's the end that counts, not the academic means.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** Yes.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples.** Yes.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** Yes.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, compre-**

hensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend. To some extent. These standards provide baseline academic expectations for students in all areas covered by them. But states that adopt these standards at a statewide level and do not develop a statewide assessment based on them are unlikely to find a common core of academic expectations emerging from their use by local school districts. Because many sets of standards as they are worded are not tailored to a particular educational level, the actual language task as it is defined locally will determine the level of intellectual difficulty. And because many standards cannot function as developmental standards and discriminate across grade levels until they are attached to a clearly defined task and an agreed upon level of performance for that task, in theory students can meet the standards at almost any educational level (except for those introduced at only a higher educational level). The reading lists do not provide a clear standard of reading difficulty because the reading levels of the suggested works in each list vary widely, although they do serve to narrow the range of acceptable performance. And given the emphasis on the reading and writing of "public documents," as well as the relative lack of attention to literary study in these standards (it is the fifth of the five standards for the elementary and middle school and receives much less space and attention than any other category at any level, including conventions of the English language), it is open to question as to how academically oriented school districts will be altogether if these standards are faithfully used.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** No. This implication does not emerge from this document.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** No. This document does not express this intention.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** Yes. This is made quite clear in the introductory material to the standards. As it believes, "the study of literature is the only situation in which [students] have the chance to explore the big ideas and the themes that emerge from social and political conflict, both in their own writing and in the writing of others." One wonders why the document writers do not see the social sciences as "situations" schools usually provide to students to explore the "big ideas" that emerge from social and political conflict. In any event, literary study is to be completely subordinated to the social sciences by clear intention in this document.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** No. This implication does not emerge in this document.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** To some extent. The sample activities offered in the standards express no particular political or social slant, but some of the writing samples in other sections of the larger document do. For example, for the elementary school, the book review of *Brothers of the Heart* shows an elementary-school student discussing a story that shows two worlds, one a "white man's world," and the second, the "Native American world," and commenting that "although some of us don't empathize with other worlds, we can all feel brotherhood and kinship." Here the insinuation that many of us are prejudiced comes out of the mouth of a babe. (One cannot help but wonder at the rather remarkable vocabulary of this fourth grader. Words such as "empathize" are not typical of elementary-school students.) Another elementary school sample is entitled "My Life as a Sea Horse" and predictably contains a feminist twist ("My husband will hatch the eggs for me in eight or more days. I think this is very fair of him. After all, they are his babies, too."). Again, out of the mouth of babes.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** Yes. This document suggests that it is desirable to organize and use the entire language arts curriculum to train students for political activism. The introductory material, the types of reading and writing standards offered, and the suggested activities all clearly serve to encourage teachers to politicize the content of the English language arts classroom, and at an early age. The prominence accorded reading political "documents" and developing associated rhetorical skills begins in the middle grades (grades 5-8). Indeed, the introduction to the standards points out that it is "important that the middle school standard anticipates the advanced degree of understanding expected at the high school level where students are expected both to critique and produce materials of these kinds."

This pedagogical philosophy is far different from one that believes that preparation for civic participation is one goal of an English language arts curriculum. It makes the tail wag the dog, since preparation for informed and active civic participation should be subordinated to clear academic goals. Because of the political orientation of this document, many standards in all strands focus on social and political skills and activities, rather than on broad intellectual development. For example, the first standard under literature for the high school expects students to make "thematic connections among literary texts, public discourse, and media." Nowhere is a breadth and depth of historical and literary knowledge ever suggested as a basis for understanding the present or for informed po-

litical participation, either through a standard or a suggested activity. All the suggested standards and activities are geared to what may be a very superficial understanding of a social or political issue and to the immediate present.

Appendix D

Ratings and Analysis of 28 States

Alabama

Summary

Strengths: This document has a number of distinct strengths. It clearly expresses civic goals for the English language-arts/reading curriculum. The literary specifics it offers for American literature in grade 11 are outstanding. Students are expected to read from lists of American authors, learn about trends in American literature, trace its development, compare the development of various genres in American literature, and recognize the style of selected American authors. They are also expected to do the same for British literature in grade 12. In addition, Alabama gives examples of specific titles of literary works in the introductory material to each grade in order to suggest the level of difficulty expected; some of these titles are for informational reading as well. Alabama expects students to learn about the history and nature of the English language. It offers check lists for language conventions that suggest students will learn how to present English appropriately in its written form. Its high-school objectives clearly expect students to engage in word study to expand reading vocabularies. Finally, students are expected to do research from elementary school on.

Limitations: There is a huge difference between the quality and measurability of the standards for 9-12 and the quality and measurability of those for K-8. The standards and objectives for K-8 are almost competely process-oriented and most are unmeasurable. These weak objectives reflect in part incoherent strands; at present, the strands do not reflect coherent bodies of research and, thus, the objectives do not address all areas in the English language arts well or completely.

Recommendations: The document needs to separate all strands so that each language process is addressed by itself. Literary study needs to be treated independently of reading. All the standards, but those for K-8 especially, need strengthening, and for all language processes. In fact, the writers of the 9-12 objectives might be asked to rewrite the 1-8 objectives. The reading strand needs to make clear that students will receive systematic instruction in phonics. It should also provide specifics on word study for enhancing vocabulary knowledge. The emphasis in the elementary grades on reading one's life into the literature one reads should be drastically reduced after the primary grades. Expectations in writing should be much stronger with regard to the text itself. Some standards at all levels should incorporate a few literary specifics, such as seminal historical documents or speeches, or options from a group of specified works. A balance between contemporary and classic children's literature may be desired, but balance needs to be spelled out as a principle and used to guide the choice of selections for the statewide reading assessments.

	Alabama	28 State Mean
Total, Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	22	19
Total, Section B: Organization of the Standards	8	9
Total, Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	15	16
Total, Section D: Quality of the Standards	12	15
Total, Sections A, B, C, and D	57	60
Total, Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	7	8
Final Sum*	50	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Alabama

Date of draft examined: September 1993

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** For the most part. The document suffers occasionally from trendy educational jargon (e.g., students are regularly to "construct meaning from printed materials by applying appropriate strategies across the curriculum" or "apply strategies to construct meaning from oral, written, and visual material"). If students are to learn to read or listen with understanding to a variety of materials, or to express themselves clearly in speech or in writing, why not say so?

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Yes. There is nothing to indicate otherwise.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing**. Yes. From second grade on, the document expects students to use "standard English in writing and speaking."

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** Yes. Alabama clearly expects students to study American literature. In grade 11, its study is mentioned in many different ways in its standards.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** For the most part. In the introduction, it expects the instructional programs developed from the standards to "better prepare future adult citizens to become effective communicators." An introductory value statement also mentions "productive citizens." However, there is no mention of the country in whose civic life they are to be effective communicators and productive citizens.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** No. This does not appear to be an expectation. The document states that it espouses a "language-kept whole" philosophy, and its grade one student outcomes seem to expect students to draw on context clues, word patterns, and sound-symbol relationships simultaneously.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** No. This is not mentioned as an expectation for students throughout the grades. Only in grade two are students expected to "read independently for increasingly longer periods of time."

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. They are presented grade by grade, but many objectives are the same for K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** To some extent only. They are organized in categories for listening and reading; writing and speaking; and literary study and language study. Research skills and processes are included in the reading and listening strand. As single categories, listening and reading, and writing and speaking, do not reflect coherent bodies of scholarship or research.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** To some extent only. Some efforts are made to present objectives in distinct clusters for the two language processes included in each broad category, but these efforts are not consistent over the grades. For example, in grade 9, the three final student outcomes for "express meaning effectively, competently, and confidently in various spoken and written modes" are "acquire personal style and voice in expression through poetry and prose," "extend familiarity with all available technology and software in the communication, research, and writing processes," and "exhibit the ability to illustrate anthologized author's style." This is a real mixed bag of outcomes. This lack of coherence in the list of outcomes within categories seems to be the result of combining two language processes in each broad category and not organizing coherent subcategories under each category. It makes it difficult for parents and other citizens to determine how well each area of knowledge or skill is developed over the grades.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** To some extent. These are addressed with some detail in objectives for interpersonal interaction, group discussion, and individual presentations. But there is little if anything on different discussion roles and on the use of established or group-generated criteria for evaluating group and individual presentations, or formal and informal talk.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing)**

to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes. To some extent. There are a few slight differences in reading skills over K-12, but they are not many and they are not expressed with much preciseness or rigor. For example, in grade 6, the student outcomes are such vague and general statements of objectives as: "interpret oral, written, and/or visual material," "construct meaning by applying appropriate strategies to printed material across the curriculum," "read with ease materials encountered in their daily lives," "utilize the studying process to manage information," "demonstrate an awareness of the research process," and "evaluate their control of the reading, listening, viewing, studying, and research processes through self-monitoring and feedback from peers and teachers." Even the "examples" of appropriate strategies are vague and undemanding: "making initial predictions about text meaning, using prior knowledge, setting purposes for reading, interpreting author's meaning, using monitoring strategies, correcting or confirming author's message." In fact, the "examples" under "general listening behaviors" for grade 6 are more demanding: "comprehending message, understanding literal meaning of words used, remembering significant details accurately, remembering directions or sequences, paraphrasing spoken messages." Examples for listening objectives are more demanding at other grade levels as well (e.g., grade 8). It is not until grade 9 that we find such a specific objective as "identify main ideas and supporting details from non-fictional reading." Some other specific reading skills are mentioned in the high-school grades as well. Development of a reading vocabulary is practically non-existent from K-8. In grades 9-12, there is suddenly explicit attention to vocabulary development; in grade 9, for example, students are to be able to note synonyms, antonyms, prefixes and base words, classification, and context clues." In grade 10, they are to "increase vocabulary" by learning "common foreign words and terms, meaning through context, structural analysis, and basic survival vocabulary," whatever the latter means.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and cultural significance.** To some extent. Literary study is treated almost as loosely as the development of reading skills is from K-8. For example, in grade 7, the only specific objective for literary study is "recognize various forms of literature according to characteristics," with two examples given (myths and realistic fiction). In grade 4, objectives include such contentless and nondemanding tasks as "choose to read/view a wide variety of literature," "respond to works of literature presented orally," and "expand their view of the world through exposure to multicultural literature." The only two objectives in grade 4 that suggest any content are: "begin to specify how text features are used to convey meaning" (with "story elements, genres, topics, bold print" as examples) and "enrich expressions of language through engagement with literary works (with "similes, metaphors, personification, and idioms" as examples).

Some life blossoms in this literary desert in 9-12; clearly, a different group of educators worked on the objectives for these levels. In grade 9, for example, students are to "recognize themes and authors of selected poems, plays, and novels from world literature," "recognize the styles of commonly anthologized authors of world literature" (with several literary devices specified), "determine the literary elements in specific works" (with plot, tone, mood, character, setting, and theme specified), and "determine how dialogue and actions are used by authors to develop characteristics." Theme is mentioned for the first time in grade 9, so far as I can tell. Some clear literary specifics are also offered in grades 11 and 12. Students are expected to read from lists of American authors, learn about trends in American literature, trace its development, compare the development of various genres in American literature, and recognize the style of selected American authors. In grade 12, they are expected to do similar things with British literature. No mention is made, however, of examining literary works with various critical lenses.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization**. To some extent. Students are expected to write for various audiences and purposes and in various genres and general writing processes are regularly mentioned, especially in the elementary grades. But the only objective through grade 5 that points to writing quality is one that addresses "writing sentences and paragraphs in an organized manner." More expectations appear in an extremely extensive check list for revising that students in grades 6-8 are to use as part of the writing process and in extensive check lists for revising after each high school grade level as well. But it is not clear if the items on these check lists are part of the required content. At no point do such terms as thesis, coherence, or transitions appear in required content objectives in the high school grades. While these check lists serve as established criteria of a sort, the thrust of the writing objectives is clearly process-oriented.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** Yes. The objectives are very general through the grades, but the check

lists mentioned in C.4 contain many specifics on all the conventions. Students would have had to be taught them to be able to use the check list.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** Yes. In grade 12, students are to "trace the development and origins of the English language in Europe," and to "identify contributions of modern linguists through a broad, general understanding of the history of the English language." At other grade levels, they are to study word origins, language usage, and dialect. In grade 10, "oral standard English recognition" is mentioned in the context of dialects, slang, and jargon.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, or speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** For the most part. Research processes are mentioned regularly throughout the grades, as are the uses of various sources of information. And in grade 12, students are expected to evaluate information gained from all sources. But there is no mention of developing good research questions.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** For the most part. A few are so bombastic or jargony that their meaning is not clear: e.g., "experience the power of language as it evokes emotion; expands thinking; and influences problem solving, decision making, and action" or "evaluate personal writing processes individually and collaboratively." For the former, an example is "writing in a literature response journal," which hardly exemplifies what is in the objective, and the intentions of the latter are obscure.

2. **They are specific**. To some extent. Most are too broad as written: e.g., "Write to clarify ideas and organize thinking." "enrich expressions of language through engagement with literary works," or "explore the etymology of language." They then need examples to make clear how they might be interpreted concretely.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** To some extent. Most of the objectives in K-8 are unmeasurable; those that are measurable tend to be in grades 9-12. The majority of the unmeasurable ones are process-oriented (see C.2 for some examples). Others are just broad general objectives: e.g., "write in a variety of modes for a variety of purposes and audiences," or "write for practical and personal purposes." Many have little if anything to do with academic learning: e.g., "select and indicate preference for various forms of written, spoken, and visual communication" or "express personal feelings, opinions, and information in formal, informal, and interpersonal situations." Some are simply dogmatic expressions (see E.7 for examples). Some are almost meaningless: e.g., "begin to interact responsibly with a variety of media to extend or enhance class studies and personal experiences," while others are banal: e.g., "increase awareness of how events and characters encountered in written and spoken works reflect human experiences." What other kinds of experiences could people's lives reflect? Some are simply unmeasurable: e.g., "expand their view of the world through exposure to multicultural literature" or "recognize the value of improvisation, role-playing, Reader's Theater, and play production as means of sharing ideas and feelings." How can one measure such expansion or such valuing?

4. **They are comprehensive**. To some extent. See the gaps mentioned in section C above.

5. **They are demanding**.

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** To some extent only. K-8 objectives indicate minimal increases in intellectual demands. In addition, the specifics that are there are often part of the example, not in the objective itself, so it is not clear what is really required. Grades 9-12 objectives show more specific increases in demands.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** Yes. The introductory material for each grade level suggests examples of literary works appropriate for that grade level, and occasionally an example for an objective indicates a title or author. In addition, in the middle grades, examples often indicate the grade level of the informational material students are to read.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples**. No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** To some extent. The examples are brief, often no more than a mention of a particular genre, strategy, or process.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** No. Even with suggested titles, authors, and other literary specifics, the objec-

tives are not specific, comprehensive, or demanding enough to lead to a common core of high academic expectations at any grade level.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** To some extent. In the elementary grades, the notion is regularly expressed in a curriculum goal and in objectives that literary works "represent various cultures and eras." This implication is not present in high-school objectives.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** Yes. This comes through in objectives such as "associate information obtained through oral and written language with personal experiences" (grade 2) and "relate the experiences and feelings of literary characters to the context of their world" (grades 3 and 5), and in such examples for an objective as the "relationship of the material's message to personal experiences" (grade 6). The use of personal experience to interpret literature is not suggested in high-school grades.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** No. This is not implied in the objectives.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** No. There is no such implication.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No. There are no descriptions of classroom activities offered.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** To some extent. Several rather meaningless and unmeasurable content objectives appear in 6-8: e.g., "Recognize the value of linguistic and cultural diversity through literature," "value recognized written, spoken, and visual works of literature representative of various cultures and eras," and "value literature because it incorporates linguistic and cultural diversity." The implication here is that we shouldn't value literature when it doesn't "incorporate linguistic and cultural diversity," whatever that means. So long as a literature objective requires students to be exposed to the literature of various social groups, peoples, or eras, that is all that is needed. One should not mandate literary "values" to students.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** To some extent. For beginning reading, a whole-language philosophy is clearly recommended, and throughout the grades, the writing objectives are heavily process-oriented and very intellectually undemanding. For example, in grade 9, students are to "evaluate personal use of each phase of the writing process with peer and teacher assistance." That is a bit much, and it isn't even clear what it necessarily entails. The reading objectives are also process-oriented in K-8.

Arizona

Summary

Strengths: Brevity and succinctness are among the great virtues of its 1996 document. It shows how most key elements for reading and writing can be specified in a short, readable document. Among its best features are its expectations for expository writing in the high-school grades, especially its demand for the use of formal logic. It also presents well-thought-out standards for demonstrating acquisition of research processes and skills, nicely sequencing different types of sources over the grades. Its 1996 document is to be commended for acknowledging the existence of American literature at the high school level. It also has a section at the high-school level called "Distinction" (Honors) that challenges the more able students to go beyond the standards expected of the others.

Limitations: There is no indication in the standards that English is the language to be learned in the English language-arts class and the language whose history is to be learned. Nor are there expectations for the learning of standard English conventions for speaking. No standards are offered for systematic word study or enhanced vocabulary knowledge over the grades. The standards for literary study contain extremely few literary specifics; there is no mention of different literary traditions or movements or of British literature at all. It is almost as if students lived in a culture-free, country-free universe. Finally, the standards imply that selections, not authors, have perspectives.

Recommendations: First, English needs to be specified as the language for the standards and the language whose history is to be learned. The standards should make clear that students will be expected to demonstrate use of standard English conventions in formal oral presentations, and the document should note preparation for informed participation in American civic life as one goal of the English language arts and reading. Details need to be laid out for the systematic development of a reading vocabulary in English, in addition to expectations for regular and independent student reading. Above all, the standards need to embed such literary and cultural specifics as key authors, works, literary traditions, and literary periods to make academic expectations clear for students' reading level at different educational levels as well as their knowledge of the nature and history of this country's literary and civic culture.

	Arizona	28 State Mean
Total, Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	19	19
Total, Section B: Organization of the Standards	12	9
Total, Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	22	16
Total, Section D: Quality of the Standards	25	15
Total, Sections A, B, C, and D	78	60
Total, Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	1	8
Final Sum*	77	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Arizona

Date of draft examined: October 1989, August 1996

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Unclear. The English language is not mentioned once in any standards in either document, even in a strand on language concepts. The word "English" is omitted in a subsection on grammar and usage. It is also avoided in a subsection entitled History of Language that, in an English language-arts document, could reasonably be expected to be entitled the history of the English language, since it is not possible for K-12 students to address the history of "language" in a meaningful way. And the skills in this section are also worded in an awkward way because of the omission of the word "English" (e.g., "gives examples of words added to language as proof of language change"). Words are added to specific languages, not language in general.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** To some extent. Students are to use "correct" conventions in writing, but the particular language is not specified. There are no expectations for conventions in oral language use.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** Yes. The August 1996 draft mentions American literature for grades 9-12. This represents an improvement over the 1989 document, which had no literary specifics at all.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** No. It contains nothing to suggest that one of its goals is the development of literacy skills for informed participation in the civic life of this particular democracy.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Yes. The 1996 document states that students in grades K-3 will "use phonetic skills to decode words." The following benchmark then notes that a variety of reading strategies will be used to "comprehend written selections." This is a considerable advance over the 1989 document, which simply indicated that the student "uses the relationship between letters and sounds as a strategy to promote fluent reading." Here phonics skills were implied as simply "a" strategy and not necessarily the most important beginning one. The next draft of the document might strengthen the learning of phonics skills with the expectation that students will apply phonics skills to interesting written selections consisting chiefly of decodable words.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** No. This is not mentioned anywhere.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. They are presented in clusters for kindergarten, grades 1-3, 4-8, and 9-12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** Yes. They are organized in strands labeled writing, reading, listening, speaking, and language concepts. Literary study is included under reading, and receives much more attention (although it is still not very much attention) in the 1996 document than it received in the 1989 document, in which literary study was almost non-existent.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** Yes. Lower-order skills are details embedded as examples within the substandards for each broad standard.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** For the most part. Students are expected to show various group skills, participate in different group roles, and show skills for formal talks. However, there is no mention of using any kind of evaluation criteria for formal or informal talk.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** For the most part. Reading skills are progressively developed for various kinds of material or purposes. However, there is nothing on the development of a reading vocabulary or word study, and no mention of reading or evaluating material relevant to civic life.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or view-**

ing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and cultural significance. For the most part. Students are expected to learn about a variety of literary elements, and some genres are mentioned. But there is nothing on the use of various critical lenses, and no literary specifics beyond the expectation that students in grades 9-12 are to "analyze classic and contemporary literature selections, drawn from American and world literature." The study of drama is not mentioned at all in the 1989 or 1996 document, although one may assume it is intended to be included.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** For the most part. The standards, as brief as they are, cover most of these elements. Writing processes, different types of writing, elements of good narrative and expository writing, use of formal logic in exposition, features of a report, and the expression of a logical argument or thesis are all mentioned. Use of variously generated criteria is not mentioned.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** For the most part. The standards cover language conventions for writing in some detail over the grades. They do not mention conventions for oral language.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** For the most part, if the language that is to be studied is the English language. Most of the topics are mentioned in the 1989 document, but without a linguistic identification. The document also mentions learning about "regional dialect differences." But there is nothing on the distinction between the oral forms and the written form.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** Yes. Research processes are addressed, and the high-school standards expect the development of a "logical argument or thesis." The standards and substandards for writing in the 1996 document mention a variety of sources of information (except for electronic ones) and various skills in preparing gathered information for different purposes, although development of useful research questions is not mentioned specifically. They are also nicely sequenced over the grade levels, with information to be obtained from observations and experience in the primary grades, from reference materials in the middle grades, and from technical and other journals in the high school, and with more exacting demands in the high-school years.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** Generally yes. (Although it is not completely clear what is intended by "compare and contrast the historical and cultural perspectives of literary selections.")

2. **They are specific**. Yes.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools)**. Yes.

4. **They are comprehensive**. For the most part. See the gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** For the most part. There are visible increases in intellectual demands over the grades, except for vocabulary learning, which is not mentioned at all. Although there are no literary or reading specifics, the types of materials students are to address (editorials, essays, reviews, critiques, technical journals, and workplace documents) as well as how they are to address them in reading and writing make it clear that the demands by high school will be high. However, it is not completely clear what level of difficulty is expected at the high-school level for reading and literary study because no specifics are offered; the demands would be clear, for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level**. No.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples**. No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** Yes. The genres mentioned are specific enough to make expectations clear. Occasionally, examples are given.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** For the most part. However, without literary specifics and some clear indication of expected reading level at different educational levels, it is not clear whether they can lead to a common core of high expectations for all students in the state.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** To some extent. This notion seems to be implied by the substandard expecting students to "recognize the historical and cultural perspectives of literary selections" from the primary grades on. The author of a literary work may have a particular perspective or outlook on life, but it is not necessarily isomorphic with the author's culture, especially if the author comes from a complex culture with diverse points of view in it. And such an expectation for the primary grades implies the formation of stereotypes by children who cannot have read widely and deeply enough to know much at all about the broad cultural context for anything they read.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** No.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues**. No.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence**. No. There is no implication of this sort. Students are expected, among other things, to "respond to a literary selection by supporting their ideas with references to the text, other works or experiences," develop a thesis with "supporting information from a variety of credible and cited resources," "apply principles of formal logic in expository writing tasks," and "write a summary that ... preserves the position of the author."

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No. No examples are offered.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma**. No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow**. No.

Colorado

Summary

Strengths: The standards are presented in a concise and readable way. The document has made a promising start in its literature standards. It commendably expects students to study the literature of the United States and refers to the "diverse voices of our national experience" and our "diverse ethnic voices." It is much more sensible to talk about the diversity of our country in this manner than to refer to America's different ethnic groups as different "cultures." The document also wants students to make judgments about literary quality.

Limitations: The document is unclear about whether students are to be given systematic instruction in phonics in the primary grades. Listening and speaking skills are inadequately addressed. The development of a reading vocabulary is not addressed through systematic word study. The literature standards do not speak with one voice; they seem to clash with each other in several different ways as if two opposing factions developed them. They also contain cryptic statements that need explanation and examples. The expectations for writing in 9-12 are weak; much more needs to be expected of the average student. It is not clear that Colorado expects students to learn English-language conventions, and there is no mention of study of the history of the English language.

Recommendations: The document needs to clarify that English is the language to be used in the English classroom, that students are to use English-language conventions for both writing and formal speech, and that students can receive systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades. The document also needs to clarify that one goal of the English language arts and reading is the use of literacy skills for informed participation in American civic life. Writing and speaking should be separated in the strands and addressed individually. The study of the history and nature of the English language needs to be included in the standards, as does a clear set of details for the systematic development of a reading vocabulary. Finally, the members of the committee that developed these standards who clearly care about the teaching of literature as literature should be asked to develop a clear set of literature standards throughout the grades that embed a variety of literary specifics. Our national literature should be described as American literature; no other country refers to its literature as American literature and the reference is absolutely clear to anyone outside this country.

	Colorado	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	16	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	11	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	15	16
Total for Section D: Quality of the Standards	14	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	56	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	12	8
Final Sum*	44	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Colorado

Date of draft examined: Summer 1996

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** No. Page 3 indicates that testing accommodations are to include use of the student's primary language. Further, a 5-page overview document entitled "Higher Expectations, Better Results: The Basics on Standards in Colorado," dated November 1995, describes an "exemplary classroom use of the model standards" for an elementary-school activity integrating science, language arts, and art in which "possible accommodations" for students with a "primary language" other than English include use of "his/her language of choice" in the classroom (e.g., "translate class discussions in Spanish") and on assessments. It is not at all clear how the English language-arts teacher can be responsible for the learning of students who communicate their learning in the classroom and on an assessment in another language.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** For the most part. Colorado's third content standard indicates that "students write and speak using conventional grammar." But the English language is not specified in this standard. If students are to use the conventions of the English language for speaking and writing, the expectation needs clarification.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** For the most part. It refers to "United States literature" several times (or "literature that reflects ... the American experience"), although it avoids referring to an entity called "American literature."

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** No. It expresses no expectation that the use of literacy skills for informed participation in the civic life of this particular democracy is one of its goals.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Unclear. All reading strategies are run together in one sentence ("use word recognition skills and resources such as phonics, context clues, picture clues, word origins, and word order clues").

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** No. It is not mentioned anywhere.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels**. They are presented in clusters for K-4, 5-8, and 9-12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** For the most part. Individual strands focus on reading, literature, conventions, resources, and thinking skills. But writing and speaking are dealt with together, neither satisfactorily.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** Yes.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** To some extent. There is nothing on various discussion purposes and roles, qualities in formal speaking, and the use of variously generated evaluative criteria. Puzzlingly, it expects them to use "dialect," among other "devices," to convey meaning.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** For the most part. It limits the development of a reading vocabulary to the "information" they read (i.e., no word study), and it limits grades 9-12 students to historical documents written in the "first-person," thus excluding the Bill of Rights, *The Federalist Papers*, and other important historical documents. The reason for this qualification is not provided.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and his-**

torical significance. To some extent. No mention is made of various interpretive lenses, few literary specifics are offered, and those that are puzzling. Although Colorado is to be applauded for talking about "diverse ethnic groups" in this country (rather than "many cultures") and the "diverse voices of our national experience" (indicating that we are one nation), it seems to focus in this country chiefly on literature reflecting the "experiences and traditions of diverse ethnic groups" or "a variety of ethnic writers." It wants students to read "classic and contemporary literature of the United States" (as well as literature "representing various cultural and ethnic traditions from throughout the world"), but "classic" is never clarified by an example, nor are any examples offered to explain what is meant by the "diverse voices of our national experience" or the "literature that reflects the uniqueness and integrity of the American experience." Further, while it wants students to identify "recurrent themes in United States literature," not one example is provided to clarify what is meant. Nor are specific literary periods mentioned for American or British literature. Colorado also seems to restrict students to specific kinds of realistic literature and to imply a limited direction for literary study. In grades 5-8, "realism of dialogue" is suggested as one characteristic of literary quality (thus excluding, for example, Lewis Carroll's works). In grades 9-12, the "author's reflection of events and ideas of his or her lifetime" is offered as another constituent of literary quality, thus possibly excluding a great deal of imaginative literature. Students are expected to "know and use literary terminology accurately," and to "determine literary quality." But other literature objectives do not leave one confident that students are to understand and enjoy literature as an aesthetic experience.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** For the most part. Standards on writing and on thinking skills deal well with many aspects of communication and expression. Students are to discriminate between fact and opinion, to make judgments about the quality of literature they read based on standard criteria (not life experiences or personal opinion), to find information to support particular ideas, and to support an opinion using various forms of persuasion, factual or emotional. However, no mention is made of coherence, focus, or paragraph development. The only result apparently sought for by "drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading" at all three educational levels is a "legible final copy." "Thesis" is mentioned in the writing and speaking standard only for "students extending their ... education beyond these standards." In grades 9-12, students are expected only to select "a focused topic" for drafting. And, in fact, in the example of an essay assignment for grade 11 students offered in the assessment section in this document, students are actually given the thesis they are to use in composing the essay.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** Yes. These are covered in some detail, although there is no mention of these as English-language conventions.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. There is nothing to address any of these topics.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** For the most part. It is not clear that students are to evaluate the quality of the information they find appropriately. In grades 9-12, students evaluate information only "in light of what they know and their specific needs." That is not adequate. Nor is there any mention of students showing the development and evaluation of a useful research question.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** For the most part. The literary objectives are obscure. What literature "reflects the uniqueness and integrity of the American experience"? What does this actually mean?

2. **They are specific.** For the most part, especially those in reading, resources, and conventions. Some are general. "Write and speak for audiences such as peers, teachers, and the community" isn't concrete enough. "Use reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing to define and solve problems" doesn't indicate the kind of problems students should define and solve in the English language arts class. "Compare the diverse voices of our national experience" doesn't indicate what they are to be compared for.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** For the most part. Verbs like "support," "identify," "paraphrase," or "organize" lead to measurable standards. Some, like "read, respond to, and discuss," "recognize the concept of classic or enduring literature," and "compare the diverse voices ... as they read," do not.

4. **They are comprehensive.** To some extent. The gaps are noted above.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address. To some extent. Many content standards contain general objectives for the particular area they deal with, but the details that indicate increasing intellectual difficulty from level to level are not spelled out well, especially for reading and writing. Nor is it clear what level of difficulty is expected at the high-school level for reading and literary study because no specifics are offered; the demands would be clear, for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level. To some extent. A few examples of literary and non-literary materials are provided in the assessment section.

c. They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples. To some extent. A very few examples are provided in the assessment section.

d. For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark. To some extent. The strand on sources is good, as is the strand on conventions. Other areas are spotty, especially writing, speaking and listening, and literary study.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** No. There are no clear literary specifics. Moreover, to judge from what is in the performance indicators and the writing samples offered in the assessment section, Colorado seems to have low academic expectations for the writing of its students from level to level. Some of what is suggested for students who go "beyond the standards" could have been expected of all grade 11 students.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** Yes. The literature performance indicators suggest that, beginning in K-4, students are to explore how literary works "reflect the ethnic background of the author and the culture in which they were written." How can young students possibly know how a work reflects its culture? Since they have not read extensively about any culture, what this means in effect is that they will believe that whatever work they happen to read about a group necessarily reflects the precise nature of its culture.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** No, this is never stated in the standards. It does expect students to read and discuss "literature that represents points of view from places, people, and events that are familiar" but they are also to do that with unfamiliar literature as well. What these "familiar" places, people, and events are is not explained.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** Yes. The content standard for literature indicates that students will read literature to investigate common issues and interests. It is not quite clear what this means, but one normally does not read literature to investigate an issue; one usually explores other kinds of reading materials for that purpose.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** No.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** Yes. Almost all reading and writing selections deal directly or indirectly with prejudice and the net effect is to stimulate ill-feeling toward this country and its mainstream population. The reading selection offered for grade 4 students, which takes place at the beginning of the century, deals with discrimination against girls in sports, as if that were a serious issue for girls then. The response guide then indicates that an acceptable answer to the very first question, which requires students to tell how the girl's experience in the story "would be similar or different if she were a young girl wanting to take part in sports today," is one that might suggest "how some sports are still inaccessible to women." The grade 8 selection is a short piece by Anne Frank, about whom the students are expected to know a great deal. The piece is accompanied by a short poem by Edward Everett Hale, about whom as a writer the students are asked or told nothing. All that students are told is that his poem helps the students "understand" Anne Frank's life," as if the events and ideas in her story lay behind his poem, and to "use the information from the introduction to the [Anne Frank] story" to explain their ideas. The most manipulative example is the essay assignment for grade 11 students, who are told to "integrate" their interpretation of a variety of excerpts from different sources with their own knowledge of the 1920s to explain what led to the tension between old and new values in the 1920s and in what ways the tensions were manifest. The excerpts have been carefully selected to lead the students to make negative judgments about the American middle class,

the American business world, Republicans, anything labeled conservative, "Americanism," and Christian fundamentalism and to associate them all with prejudice against blacks and the Ku Klux Klan. In addition, the thesis sentence is literally given for the composition that students are to write. Not much demanding thinking seems to be expected of Colorado students, nor are any of the literary selections in this section in any way treated as literary works.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** No.

Delaware

Summary

Strengths: The document is written and formatted in a clear and understandable way for a public audience. It shows clearly how grade by grade increases take place in its standards by italicizing new features at each successive grade level. Reading skills are progressively developed very well, and coverage of research processes and skills is quite thorough. For the most part, its standards are clear, specific, and measurable.

Limitations: The document's speaking and listening standards are not as strong as they could be. The reading strand lacks details on systematic vocabulary development through word study, and there are no details on English-language conventions over the grades. Study of the history and nature of the English language is not mentioned. The document contains no cultural and literary specifics at any grade level, and is heavy-handed about the specific pedagogy it wants for literary study.

Recommendations: The document first needs to establish expectations that students are to use standard English conventions in formal speaking, to participate in American civic life and become productive citizens of this particular country, and to study American literature. Second, it needs to spell out detailed objectives over the grades addressing the development of a reading vocabulary through systematic word study as well as the history and nature of the English language. Above all, it needs to incorporate some cultural and literary specifics into its literature objectives at all educational levels; some key works, authors, traditions, movements, and themes in America's literary and cultural heritage are necessary for civic and cultural literacy. In order to strengthen the study of literature as literature, the document should eliminate its anti-literary and anti-academic requirements or expectations.

	Delaware	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	19	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	12	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	14	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	20	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	65	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	14	8
Final Sum*	51	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Delaware

Date of draft examined: June 1995

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** No. Page vi says that "students' linguistic diversity must be recognized, respected, and built upon." One wonders how English language-arts teachers will build upon, say, Urdu in their classes.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** For the most part. In writing it is clear that students are to demonstrate standard English conventions. But for oral communication, "speakers draw upon the language of their home, community, and culture—as well as the public language of the larger culture—to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences."

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** To some extent. In its standards, Delaware expects students to respond to texts "representing the diversity of American cultural heritage," a syntactically awkward phrase that does not forthrightly acknowledge the existence of a body of work called "American literature."

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** For the most part. It expects them to become "productive citizens of the 21st century." But it doesn't indicate the country in whose civic life they will participate as citizens.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Yes. It separates word identification skills from the use of context clues.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** No.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. In four gradespans: K-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9-10.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** For the most part. One strand combines writing and speaking, another combines reading, viewing, and listening, a third deals with skills entailed in finding and using information, and a fourth deals with literary knowledge. As single categories, listening, viewing, and reading, and writing and speaking, do not reflect coherent bodies of scholarship or research. Although no distinction is made among listening, viewing, and reading skills, the document does, however, list objectives for oral and written expressive skills in distinct subcategories.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** Yes.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated and personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** To some extent. There is no mention of various discussion roles and behaviors or student use of formal criteria for evaluating informal and formal speaking in groups or as individuals.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** For the most part. Most reading skills are progressively developed quite well in this document. However, vocabulary is not systematically developed; for the most part, students are to rely on context and on dictionaries to discern the meanings of unfamiliar words.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance.** For the most part. There is good coverage of general aspects of literary study, but no cultural or literary specifics aside from a mention of "American cultural heritage" and texts representing "various nations and cultures."

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity**

with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization. For the most part. No mention of students using criteria to judge own or others' writing.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** To some extent. No specifics are given at any grade level, and no standard conventions are mentioned for use in oral language.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. No mention of the history of the English language or differences between its forms.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, speaking, and research. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** Yes. Very thorough here, although it needs to be a bit clearer about the need for developing useful (and open-ended) research questions: the current document talks only about gathering information "relevant to a defined need."

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** For the most part. There is occasionally some jargon, like "using divergent thinking."

2. **They are specific.** For the most part. See C.5 above to indicate where there are no specific standards.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** For the most part. See E.2 and E.3 for examples of unmeasurable objectives.

4. **They are comprehensive.** To some extent. The gaps are mentioned above.

5. **They are demanding.**
a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** For the most part. Differences over the grades are highlighted by italics. But it is not clear what level of difficulty is expected for reading and literary study at the different educational levels because no literary specifics are offered; the demands would be clear, at the high-school level for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No. The document mentions only the use of "appropriate texts," or "literature appropriate for age, stage, and interest."

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples**. For the most part. They are in an accompanying document called "Classroom Performance Models."

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** To some extent. Vignettes are provided in the standards document.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** For the most part. But without literary specifics in the standards and some index of reading difficulty for each assessed level, it is not clear how there can be a common core of high academic expectations.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** Yes. A statement of philosophy that attempts to make teachers believe that bad teaching was characteristic of older pedagogies explains that students will "experience a multicultural perspective throughout their language arts instruction" rather than "be exposed to a single perspective only." This implies that before something called multiculturalism came along, students were being given a "single perspective" in their literature programs. "A multicultural perspective" also implies that cultures have single and singular perspectives.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** Yes. Delaware is very heavy-handed about this. It wants students to "connect their own experiences to those of literary characters by ... relating to the feelings of characters of varying ages, genders, nationalities, races, cultures, religions, and disabilities; d. identifying with characters based on a clear understanding of motivation and situation; e. relating incidents in the text to life experiences; f. relating the theme of literary text and media to personal experiences."

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** Yes. Students are to "apply knowledge gained from literature as a basis for understanding self and society by a. using literature as a resource for shaping decisions; b. using literature as a resource for understanding social and political issues." One vignette suggests four "excellent examples of books" featuring violence that an English teacher might use for a grade 8 class that "wanted to learn about violence." Another vignette lists six books for a grade 8 class highlighting a "major societal issue:" the books deal with homelessness, gangs/violence, family, racism, escape/drugs, and self-actualization.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** To some extent. Students from K-8 are expected to "analyze and evaluate information and messages" by "acknowledging the possibility of a variety of interpretations of the same text." No distinction is made between the nature of a literary work and, say, that of directions on a medicine bottle or other informational materials. Nor is it suggested that some interpretations may not be taking into account the presence, quality, or weight of the evidence. The presence of "ambiguity," mentioned in a preceding performance indicator, seems to be the only reason for this "variety." Only in 9-10 are students "proposing other interpretations as valid if supported by the text."

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** To some extent. Too many classroom vignettes in both documents deal with social issues. Students tend to be grounded in the here and now, rather than engaged with timeless or universal themes in good literature, as in the study of *Our Town*.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow**. No.

Florida

Summary

Strengths: The document is written in clear prose for the general public, is organized in coherent strands, and its standards are generally clear, specific, and measurable. Moreover, it tries to offer clear examples for each benchmark. Its expectations for reading and writing increase from level to level, for the most part, and it spells out expectations for standard English conventions for writing.

Limitations: The document contains no benchmarks for standard English conventions for formal speaking. Details for developing a reading vocabulary are not spelled out beyond grade 5, a noticeable gap in an otherwise satisfactory reading strand. There is almost nothing on the history and nature of the English language, and there are no cultural and literary specifics at all. The document contains serious anti-literary and anti-academic requirements or expectations.

Recommendations: The document first needs to note that one goal of an English language-arts and reading program is to help students acquire the literacy skills needed for informed participation in American civic life. It needs to make clear that students will receive systematic instruction in phonics. Details need to be spelled out for systematic word study beyond grade 5, and for study of the history and nature of the English language. Above all, the document needs to spell out some cultural and literary specifics in its standards: some key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions will make clear its academic expectations for students' reading level at different educational levels as well as their knowledge of the nature and history of their literary and civic culture. To support high expectations, the document's anti-literary and anti-academic requirements or expectations should be eliminated.

	Florida	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	19	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	12	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	21	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	21	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	73	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	14	8
Final Sum*	59	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Florida

Date of draft examined: 1996

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Yes. There is nothing to indicate otherwise. The language strand mentions study of the English language specifically.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** For the most part. For writing, "correct" use is expected. And it is clear that the language is English. For example, the language strand expects understanding of the "difference between the use of English in formal and informal settings," "differences between language that is used at home and language that is used at school," and "appropriate adjustments in language use for social, academic, and life situations." But expectations for standards in oral language are unclear. There are no benchmarks dealing with standard or "correct" English usage and grammar in formal speaking.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays**. To some extent. The phrase is never used in the document, but an author is acknowledged as an American or as coming from America.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** To some extent. This is not stated directly. But the introduction says that "people vary their speech to accomplish tasks, take charge of their lives, express their opinions, function as productive citizens, and entertain themselves and others."

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Unclear. All beginning reading strategies are mentioned in the same sentence for Pre-K-2: "identifies words ... using the strategies of phonics, word structure, and context clues."

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** No. A primary grade benchmark states only that the student "selects material to read for pleasure."

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments**. Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. Standards are presented for grades Pre-K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** Yes. The strands are reading; writing; listening, viewing, and speaking; language; and literature.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** Yes.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech**. For the most part. There are many good benchmarks in these areas. But there is no mention of student use of formal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes**. Yes. As a whole, these are all covered well. Reading skills show clear development in intellectual demands over the grades. Development of a reading vocabulary through attention to word meanings and word study begins in grades 3-5, although it is not clearly spelled out at higher grade levels.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance.** For the most part. All the basic literary elements and genres are addressed under the goal of understanding the "common features of a variety of literary forms," and students are expected to examine a literary selection from "several critical perspectives." But there are no literary or cultural specifics at all. One benchmark expects students to identify the "defining characteristics of classic literature," but no examples of classic literature are offered to define the category.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** For the most part. Writing processes and writing for communication are well-covered. But there is no specific mention of the use of variously generated evaluation criteria by students

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** For the most part. Conventions for written language are clearly spelled out. Expectations for use of conventions for oral language are unclear.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** To some extent. Students are expected to learn about differences between informal and formal uses of English and between home and school language. But there is nothing on the history of the English language or the distinction between oral and written forms of English. High-school students are expected to understand "differences among various dialects of English" without any clarification that these various dialects are oral in nature. Unfortunately, the sample performance description for this benchmark asks students to read "literary works by authors from different regions of America and from different socioeconomic classes" without explaining that semi-educated people (just as students themselves) may use poor written English because they have not experienced a complete education.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** For the most part. Not all types of sources of information are mentioned, and there is no mention of the development or useful or open-ended research questions.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** Yes. The benchmarks are generally free of jargon and cryptic language. (One exception is "knows ways in which literature reflects the diverse voices of people from various backgrounds.")

2. **They are specific**. For the most part. The benchmarks are generally at the appropriate level of specificity. A few are much too general, especially in the language strand. For example, "understand that languages change over time" is much too general for students in grades 6-8. This benchmark is more realistic when it is exemplified as "researches and reports on words in the English language that have changed or added a new meaning in the last ten years." However, this is still a difficult assignment for most students in grades 6-8.

Unfortunately, an example doesn't always make a generality clearer. The document chose to illustrate its benchmark "demonstrates an awareness that language and literature are primary means by which culture is transmitted" with the following example: "reads an English work by a non-American author and discusses with other students what the work reveals about the culture and time in which the work was written." The example clearly does not show that "language and literature" may be the primary means by which the culture of a non-American author is transmitted. If anything, it may show the opposite, if one takes Joseph Conrad or Chinua Achebe as an example. If Florida had tried to come up with some specific titles, it would have discovered the problem with its academic cliché.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** For the most part. Verbs like "identifies," "analyzes," "understands," "uses," "demonstrates," and "applies" are commonly used throughout the document. But some benchmarks are not measurable, such as "uses a variety of reading materials to develop personal preferences in reading," "acknowledges feelings and messages sent in a conversation," and a few assertions preceded by "understands that," "knows that," and "recognizes that," mainly in the language and literature strands.

4. **They are comprehensive**. For the most part. See the gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** To some extent. Overall, the reading and writing strands show increasing intellectual difficulty over the grades. However, it is not always clear for some features what the progression in difficulty is. As one example, for a progression on word study, the student in 3-5 "uses simple strategies to determine meaning and increase vocabulary for reading, including the use of prefixes, suffixes, root words, multiple meanings, antonyms, synonyms, and word relationships." This is a promising start, but in 6-8, the student only "demonstrates consistent and effective use of interpersonal and academic vocabularies in reading, writing, listening, and speaking," and in 9-12, merely "refines vocabulary for interpersonal, academic, and workplace situations, including figurative, idiomatic, and technical meanings."

The literature and language strands are more problematic. As an example for a progression relating literature to life,

the Pre-K-2 student "uses personal perspective in responding to a work of literature, such as relating characters and simple events in a story or biography to people or events in his or her own life." In 3-5, the student "responds to a work of literature by explaining how the motives of the characters or the causes of events compare with those in his or her own life." In 6-8, the student "responds to a work of literature by interpreting selected phrases, sentences or passages and applying the information to personal life," and in 9-12, the student "recognizes and explains those elements in texts that prompt a personal response, such as connections between one's own life and the characters, events, motives, and causes of conflict in texts." It is not clear what the progression in difficulty is at all. This is almost exactly the case in the language strand; in Pre-K-2, the students "recognizes the differences between language that is used at home and language that is used at school," in 3-5 "understands that language formality varies according to situations and audiences," in 6-8, "demonstrates an awareness of the difference between the use of English in formal and informal settings," and in 9-12, "makes appropriate adjustments in language use for social, academic, and life situations, demonstrating sensitivity to gender and cultural bias."

Nor is it clear whether a progression covers all educational levels. For example, for understanding literary elements, in Pre-K-2, students are to identify "setting, plot, character, problem, and solution/resolution." In 3-5, students are to identify "symbol, theme, simile, alliteration, and assonance." In 6-8, students are to understand "word choice, symbolism, figurative language, mood, irony, foreshadowing, flashback, persuasion techniques, and point of view." But it is not clear what extends the learning of literary elements in 9-12. The reading and literature standards contain no literary specifics to indicate level of difficulty. Intellectual demands would be clear, in the high school years for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No. Examples of each benchmark are provided, but with one exception there are no examples of titles or authors in them.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples**. No. No samples of writing are provided in this document.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** Yes, examples are provided.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** For the most part. But without an indication of reading levels, writing samples, and literary specifics, it is not clear how there can be a common core of academic expectations for all students in the state.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature**. To some extent. This is not necessarily implied by the benchmarks dealing with "culture," but the idea creeps into the sample performance descriptions. LA.E.2.3.5. suggests that the student "analyzes how writers of different cultural backgrounds address the theme of "change." The implication is that writers of the same cultural background address "change" in exactly the same way and that writers from different cultural backgrounds may each address "change" in a different way from each other. LA.E.2.4.7.a indicates that a text may be viewed according to a "cultural perspective." The sample performance description for LA.E.3.4.a wants students to discuss how two poems "written by poets from two different cultures" differ, again implying that works by two writers from the same culture wouldn't differ.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** Yes. See the progression relating literature to life described under 5.a above. Florida goes beyond expecting students to relate what they read to their lives to expecting them to apply what they read to their lives: students in grades 6-8 are to respond to a work of literature "by interpreting selected phrases, sentences, or passages and applying the information to personal life." In the example offered, it wisely restricts the benchmark to "selects a key passage that clearly reflects what he or she thinks is the work's most compelling theme and explains his or her views in an essay." Nevertheless, enjoining students to apply what they learn from their reading to their personal lives or to the lives of others is fraught with all kinds of hazards. There are examples of love-struck adolescents who have read Romeo and Juliet and then attempted to apply the characters' "solution" to their lives because their parents objected to their relationship. Students may bring misunderstood ideas as well as bad ideas in what they read to their own lives or to others'. Such a benchmark encourages an irresponsible and potentially dangerous pedagogy.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** No. This is not directly stated in the benchmarks.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** For the most part. For grades 6-8, the student is expected to "know that a literary

text may elicit a wide variety of valid responses." It does not suggest that these responses would all have to demonstrate the same level of accuracy, adequacy, and logic to be equally "valid." Elsewhere, students are expected to use information from a literary text to support their interpretation of it, but no factors are suggested that might limit or qualify the number or validity of the interpretations. Nor are ambiguous language and unclear referents in the text suggested as factors in creating multiple interpretations. Indeed, it is suggested that students will "know that people respond differently to texts based on their background knowledge, purpose, and point of view."

Fortunately, the benchmarks in the reading strand do not tend to suggest the possibility of multiple interpretations for informational material. In the reading strand, grades 9-12 students are to "analyze the validity and reliability of primary source information." Only in grades 6-8 does Florida slip on this. Here the benchmark begins correctly by saying that students are to "check the validity and accuracy of information obtained from research, in such ways as differentiating fact and opinion, identifying strong vs. weak arguments." But then it finishes with "recognizing that personal values influence the conclusions an author draws." This ending may lead to the inculcation by teachers of skepticism about the rational quality of logical conclusions even though the benchmark doesn't actually say that personal values determine the conclusions and its example deals only with an evaluation of sources of information.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior**. No.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** To some extent. For example, one benchmark teaches that "people respond differently to texts based on their background knowledge, purpose, and point of view." Another teaches that "language and literature are primary means by which culture is transmitted." It would be interesting if the document explained how the use of the English language transmits a culture, and what specific culture. And are not religious ceremonies and ways of living, eating, and dancing also primary means?

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** To some extent. The literature strand implicitly recommends a reader-response approach to a literary work.

Georgia

Summary

Strengths: The document is written in clear prose for the general public. Most of its standards are clear, specific and measurable. It makes clear its expectation that students are to use standard English conventions in writing and in formal speaking. It is one of the few documents to spell out some general cultural and literary specifics, expecting students in grade 11 to study American literature (commendably described as "representing diverse backgrounds and traditions"), its literary movements, periods, and the major cultural, religious, philosophical and political influences on it at different periods. It expects grade 12 students to do the same for British literature. It is also one of the very few documents to expect students to study the history and nature of the English language. This topic is addressed very thoroughly.

Limitations: Its objectives in each strand are in lists and need to be sorted into higher- and lower-level skills. Its objectives for vocabulary development through the grades are not as strong or as clearly detailed as they could be. It lacks mention of key literary titles and works for American and British literature in its standards to indicate expected civic and cultural knowledge, as well as level of reading difficulty.

Recommendations: The next draft of this document needs to indicate that one major purpose of the English language-arts and reading is to help students acquire the literacy skills needed for informed participation in American civic life. It should also clarify its expectation that students will receive systematic instruction in decoding skills and engage in regular independent reading throughout the grades. Above all, it should further develop its literature standards to encompass some required titles or authors to make clear its academic expectations for students' reading level and their knowledge of this country's literary and civic culture. This is an excellent first draft, and with some attention to the few limitations or omissions noted in the following analysis, it could be one of the best in the country.

	Georgia	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	22	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	8	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	25	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	19	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	74	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	1	8
Final Sum*	73	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Georgia

Date of draft examined: January 1997 (draft)

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Yes. There is nothing to indicate otherwise in this draft.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** Yes. Students are to use standard English in writing at all grade levels and to demonstrate the use of standard American English in speaking "in appropriate settings" from grade 6 on.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** Yes. Grade 11 objectives clearly expect students to study American literature.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens**. No. This is not indicated in this draft.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Unclear. The same groups of decoding skills are specified for teaching from K-2, but it is not clear if they will be taught systematically or not. It is also not clear if students will be expected to apply decoding skills they have just learned to texts containing mostly decodable words so that they can learn to identify words without having to depend on context clues.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality**. No. This is not mentioned in this draft.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. They are presented grade by grade and by high-school courses.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts**. Yes. They are grouped in categories labeled: reading, literature, writing, reference and study skills, listening and speaking, and grammar and usage.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** No. The standards listed in each strand in this draft contain both higher- and lower-level knowledge and skills.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** For the most part. Over the grades, the standards address the roles and behavior of students as speakers and listeners in discussions and in individual presentations, and the use of criteria to evaluate oral presentations. But participation in various formats for discussion (such as debates or panel discussions) are not mentioned, nor is the use of criteria to evaluate and improve group discussion.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes**. For the most part. Reading skills are progressively developed in the standards, and students are expected to use a variety of features, genres, and strategies. But the development of a reading vocabulary is not adequately addressed. It is mentioned regularly as an objective, and at a few grade levels a few specific ways of increasing vocabulary systematically pointed out (in grades 4 and 5). At higher grade levels, students regularly engage in word analysis ("recognize affixes, roots, and compound elements"), sort out literal and non-literal meanings of words, and use context to figure out the meaning of unknown words. But no mention of Greek and Latin combining forms, cognates or derivatives, idioms, or homographs (which are far more relevant to reading skill than homophones).

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and cultural significance.** For the most part. Various literary elements and genres are spelled out in some detail over the grades, as are other aspects of literary analysis. In addition,

students are expected to read both contemporary and "traditional" literature, although what comprises the latter category is not spelled out. In grade 11, students are expected to study American literature (commendably described as "representing diverse backgrounds and traditions"), its literary movements, periods, and the major cultural, religious, philosophical, and political influences on it at different periods. In grade 12, they do the same with British literature. However, no specific titles or authors are mentioned, and there is no mention of using different critical lenses in the regular grade-by-grade objectives, only for contemporary literature in 9-12 and world literature in 11-12.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** Yes. Writing processes are addressed in detail. Various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization are also addressed. Although there is nothing specific on the use of established or peer-generated criteria, peer-editing and peer evaluation of writing are mentioned.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** Yes. These are clearly spelled out in detail over the grades.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** Yes. The history of the English language is thoroughly addressed in the standards, including "the meaning of dialect," the effects that the printing press and the dictionary have had on language change" and the notion that "English usage is shaped by social, cultural, and geographical differences."

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** Yes. These are all thoroughly addressed in the standards throughout the grades, including development of research questions.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** Yes. They are free of jargon and clear in meaning.

2. **They are specific.** For the most part. They tend to be specific in meaning, although some are too general, such as "communicates effectively through oral expression," "reads for a variety of purposes to obtain meaning from different kinds of materials," "writes and speaks critically about literature," "critically responds to various media," and "makes use of syntactic and semantic relationships."

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** For the most part. There are some scattered throughout that are unmeasurable (e.g., "Recognizes that literature reflects human experiences" (what else could it generally reflect?), "responds creatively to literature," "identifies and chooses literature according to personal interests," "expands listening vocabulary," "expands speaking vocabulary," "adjusts reading speed," "expands writing vocabulary," "experiments with organization, style, purpose, and audience," "expands reading vocabulary," and "adapts writing style to various audiences."

4. **They are comprehensive**. For the most part. See gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address**. For the most part. In each area, the standards are of increasing intellectual difficulty. But it is not completely clear what level of difficulty is expected at the high-school level for reading and literary study; the demands would be clear, for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No. Not in this draft.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples.** No. Not in this draft.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** No. Not in this draft.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** For the most part. Overall, Georgia's proposed standards are quite good. But without more literary specifics (such as key authors or works), and an indication of expected writing levels, it is not clear how they can lead clearly to high academic expectations for

all students in the state.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** No. This is not implied in the standards in this draft.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** No. This is not stated in the standards in this draft.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** No. This is not stated in the standards in this draft.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** To some extent only. The standards do not imply this at all for informational reading. But in high-school standards for courses in comparative literature and composition, and AP language, composition, and literature, students are to recognize "multiple valid interpretations of a single work." Although one might be able to assume that it will be understood at this level that equally valid interpretations of a single literary work depend upon evidence of equal weight and accuracy, a standard should state this qualification so that no citizen reading these standards thinks that anything goes at high levels of literary analysis.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No. None are offered in this draft.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow**. No.

Hawaii

Summary

Strengths: The document is written in clear prose for the general public. It clearly expects students to demonstrate standard English in their writing and to be able to use it in speaking.

It has strong standards in speaking and listening. It is one of the few documents whose standards expect students to develop an understanding of the major periods of English and American literature. In addition, it provides examples of specific literary titles at each educational level to indicate expectations for reading level as well as literary content.

Limitations: Standards in most strands and at all levels do not express high academic expectations, nor do they tend to increase in complexity over the grades; too many are process-oriented or unmeasurable for other reasons. The systematic study of words to develop a reading vocabulary is not addressed in meaningful detail after grade 3, nor is there any mention of the study of the history and nature of the English language. Composition expectations are especially weak in the high-school grades.

Recommendations: The document needs to make clear that one goal of the English language arts and reading is to help students acquire the literacy skills needed for informed participation in American civic life. It should also make clear that students are to receive systematic instruction in decoding skills and to be expected to engage in regular independent reading throughout the grades. The major task in strengthening this document lies in moving beyond a fixation on writing and reading processes and developing in almost every area specific and measurable standards that express high academic expectations at each level and increasing academic expectations over the grades. As part of this task, the document needs to incorporate literary and cultural specifics into its standards at all educational levels to indicate its academic expectations for students' reading level as well as their knowledge of this country's literary and civic culture.

	Hawaii	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	22	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	9	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	8	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	11	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	50	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	9	8
Final Sum*	41	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Hawaii

Date of draft examined: June 1994

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Yes. There is nothing to indicate otherwise.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** Yes. At all educational levels, students are expected to demonstrate "standard English" in their writing, and from grade 4 on to demonstrate the ability to use various forms of spoken language (e.g., "pidgin, standard English, formal English").

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** Yes. American literature is mentioned once, in a performance standard for grades 9-12.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** To some extent only. The document never mentions the use of literacy skills for informed participation in the civic life of this particular democracy as one of its goals in its introductory material. However, in its performance standards for grades 7-12, it expects students to "present information in a variety of contexts," and one of these contexts is "citizenship."

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** No. This expectation is not made clear in this document. In K-3, the content standard for "word analysis skills and vocabulary building skills" lists "context" as the first strategy in demonstrating performance, with "phonic cues" mentioned third. In grades 4-6, the performance standard combines all strategies together in a jargon-loaded and rather meaningless statement ("integrate meaning, language, and visual print as cues while reading").

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality**. To some extent. The performance standards through the grades expect the student to "demonstrate enjoyment of reading on his/her own," but this is not quite the same thing. Students don't have to do much or regular independent reading to show enjoyment.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. The standards are presented in four clusters: K-3, 4-6, 7-8, and 9-12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts**. Yes. They are grouped under three categories: speaking and listening, reading and literature, and writing and composition. Under each category, standards are presented in separate groups for reading, literature, writing process, and composition elements.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** To some extent. There are several content standards in each category, with a number of performance standards for each content standard. However, the performance standards are of varying kinds and at various conceptual levels for a particular content standard. For example, for grades 4-6, the performance standards under types of literature include "use literature to build a larger understanding of one's world," "build appreciation for a variety of literary forms," and "connect literature to own life experiences," all rather broad and unmeasurable objectives. Indeed, they are more like philosophical goals than performance standards. They also include "identify facts and ideas from a variety of informational texts" and "demonstrate understanding of different forms and their characteristics," which are not concrete and measurable tasks.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** For the most part. The performance standards address in detail how to participate in discussion, various discussion roles, and the qualities of formal speaking. In some ways, the expectations for formal speaking are higher and more detailed than those for formal writing (e.g., develop information or organize ideas in a manner that is easy to follow," "use ideas and details appropriate to and in support of the main idea, claim, or proposition," "tie ideas together in a chain of reasoning (i.e., organizes information logically)," and "provide necessary development of ideas to support idea, thesis, and issue"). The content standards also provide an impressive list of suggested "influential speakers and speeches" at each educational level. However, although students are to "evaluate the effectiveness of own and others' communications" for formal speaking, there is no mention of strategies for improving group discussion or of use of established criteria for evaluating formal speech or group discussions.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** To some extent. Although there are many performance standards for the "reading process" and for "reading comprehension and critical reading skills," very few of them at each educational level are actually academic learning standards that can be reliably assessed. Moreover, there is not much discernible increase in academic expectations from level to level, despite the addition of a few more performance standards at each higher level. For example, under "reading comprehension and critical reading skills" for grades 4-6, of the 12 performance standards offered, only two seem to have academic expectations for measurable performance ("identify main ideas and supporting details, sequence of events, cause and effect, classifications, processes or procedures" and "demonstrate comprehension of text by writing about theme/author's message." In addition, there is nothing on vocabulary development beyond grade 3 that is not a repetition of what is in K-3 ("context, phonic analysis, and structural analysis"). A performance standard such as "identify new or meaningful vocabulary from reading" is not a systematic way to develop a reading vocabulary. The performance standards express minimal expectations.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and cultural significance.** To some extent. The standards mention the study of various genres of literature, literary elements, and both contemporary and "traditional" literature, but that is about all. There are almost no substantive details provided at each educational level, and no substantive differences in expectations from level to level. Nor are there any specifics on types of critical lenses. Many of the "performance" standards are vague and lofty pedagogical or philosophical goals (e.g., in grade 9 "engage in multiple responses to literature including personal, interpretive, and critical responses," "understand the scope and diversity of the literary traditions of the world and the influences of these traditions on contemporary thought," "develop sensitivity to the beauty of literature and expand vision of the world," and "learn to listen through literature to the voices of writers both traditional and new that represent the diversity of our society." There are no literary specifics mandated in the content standards (under "sources of literature," students are to read "contemporary, different centuries, different countries, works translated from non-English texts, etc."), but for grades 9-12, Hawaii does expect students to "develop an understanding of the major periods of English and American literature." Although no other specifics are given (the major periods, for example), this welcome acknowledgment of the nature of our literary heritage is supported by about a half dozen suggested titles at each educational level that point to expectations for reading level as well as literary content (e.g., at grades 9-12, the titles include *The Odyssey*, *A Doll's House*, and *The Miracle Worker*).

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** To some extent. The writing processes are covered at all levels, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization are mentioned. However, there is no mention of the use of such crucial concepts in composition as thesis or controlling idea, coherence, development of topic sentences, or use of transition devices. The expectations in formal speaking are much greater than those for advanced composition in grades 9-12.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** To some extent. The conventions are mentioned at each educational level for writing and composition, but no details are offered at any level. And there is no mention of language conventions for formal speaking, although students are expected to be familiar with various forms of oral language at all grade levels.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. None of these items is addressed in the content or performance standards.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, speaking, and research. These include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** To some extent. Using dictionaries and other reference materials is mentioned. And students are expected to write a research paper. But the various skills involved in the research process are not detailed, no increasing expectations are stated for doing research over the grades, and there is no indication of the variety of sources of information students should draw on as well as the development of good research questions.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** For the most part. A few are obscure (e.g., "view self as reader," "recognize patterns when reading and use patterns as a cue system," and "identify issues concerning attitudes and draw personal conclusions."

2. **They are specific.** To some extent only. Far too many are very general or hazy in nature (e.g., "discuss reading, referring appropriately to text," "read and comprehend a variety of texts," "demonstrate comprehension of text by writing about characters, events, problems, goals, events, solutions, and outcomes included in texts," or "use a variety of reference materials."

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** To some extent only. Far too many are process-oriented (e.g., "share writing through various means" or "generate interpretive and critical questions about the reading materials"). Many others are simply unmeasurable because they are completely subjective in reference (e.g., "utilize own experience for writing," "use personal and external sources ... to generate ideas," or "use new vocabulary in reading, writing, and speaking"). Others are expressions of lofty goals and are also unmeasurable (see examples in B.3).

4. **They are comprehensive.** No. See the gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** To some extent only. It is difficult to discern increasing academic expectations over the grades, especially because so many performance standards are process-oriented or basically unmeasurable. Moreover, there are few standards at higher grade levels that expect students to analyze, evaluate, or otherwise engage in intellectually demanding reading and writing activities, such as developing a thesis or argument, marshaling evidence or information pro and con, evaluating this evidence or information, reasoning from premises and evidence, and drawing logical and well-supported conclusions. In 9-12, students are still expected to do nothing more in writing than "search for a focus and begin to identify purpose, audience, and form. Nowhere is the expectation that they should be able to write a composition with a clear thesis, and with well-developed paragraphs logically related to it.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** Yes. Suggested titles are offered for literature at all educational levels.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples.** No

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** To some extent. For formal speaking, there is a fine list of suggested speakers and speeches for students to study at all grade levels, although it is not clear exactly what students might look for in these speeches.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** No. Hawaii's performance standards are such a weak expression of academic expectations that a common core of high expectations for all students in the state is not possible. Grades 9-12 are particularly weak.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** Yes. This implication emerges in performance standards that expect students to read literature that "represents a variety of cultural perspectives." The implication is that if an author comes from a particular culture, the author's work "represents" that culture. There is no indication that modern, complex cultures typically contain authors who express a variety of different points of view.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences**. Yes. At every level, students are expected to "connect literature to own life experiences." How students are to do that with *Romeo and Juliet*, *Animal Farm*, *Mary Poppins*, *Moby Dick*, for example, is not clear.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues**. No. This expectation is not stated.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** No. This implication is not present in these standards. On the other hand, there is nothing in the performance standards that clearly asks students to provide evidence from a literary work to support an interpretation.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No. No examples are given.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** To some extent. The reading and writing standards are so oriented to process and to unmeasurable objectives that they implicitly recommend a process approach to reading and writing.

Idaho

Summary

Strengths: The document is written in a clear prose style, and it expects students to use standard English in speaking and writing. Commendably, it provides titles of a few specific works at each grade level as examples of cultural and literary specifics for that grade level and as examples of the level of reading difficulty expected. It also shows what will be expected in writing assessments.

Limitations: Its organizing strands are not useful for a comprehensive standards document in the English language arts, nor are objectives for each standard organized in coherent subcategories. Although objectives are listed by grade levels, few change from one grade level to another. Expectations for writing are very inadequate. Too many standards in the document lack specificity and measurability. Overall, they do not reflect high academic expectations.

Recommendations: The document needs to indicate that one goal of an English language-arts and reading program is to help students acquire the literacy skills needed for informed participation in American civic life. It also needs to make clear that students will receive systematic instruction in phonics. Above all, it needs to develop academically-oriented standards that are specific and measurable. The document needs to move far beyond a writing and reading process approach to learning, and to eliminate standards that focus on values and attitudes. Details need to be spelled out for systematic word study at all grade levels, and students should be expected to study the history and nature of the English language. Above all, the document needs to spell out some cultural and literary specifics in its standards: some key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions will make academic expectations clear for students' knowledge of the nature and history of their literary and civic culture.

	Idaho	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	18	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	5	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	8	16
Total for Section D: Nature of he Standards	14	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	45	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	13	8
Final Sum*	32	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Idaho

Date of draft examined: 1994

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Yes. There is nothing to indicate otherwise. The document wants students to "acknowledge language variety as an element of cultural heritage," but it does not suggest that English language-arts teachers must draw on students' linguistic heritage in their English language-arts classes.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** Yes. Students are expected to "demonstrate standard English in oral and written communication."

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** No. American literature as a body of literature is never mentioned in the document. Students are expected to read "traditional, classical, and contemporary literature," but these terms are not defined in the document.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** To some extent. In the early grades, the document expects students to "use language arts to contribute to society as caring, responsible citizens," but the document never indicates the country in which they are to be citizens. After grade 4, citizenship seems to disappear. In the middle grades, students are expected only to "recognize that language skills are important for self-expression and conflict resolution." And in 9-12, they are to "recognize the importance of language arts skills in interpersonal and professional contexts."

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** No. The document speaks with forked tongue on this question. It acknowledges that knowledge of letter-sound relationships is "very important" and wants it taught "systematically." But it qualifies its own emphatic statement immediately by saying it is "only one of many important strategies students must master." It also implies that phonics is best taught through the literature and from students' own writing, completely undoing the notion of systematicity.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** To some extent. In the middle grades, the document wants students to "self-select reading materials for pleasure and exploration in free time" and to "share and discuss independent reading with others." There is nothing that specifies the amount.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes. The document contains reading and writing assessment scoring standards for grades 4, 8, and 12, and these standards are overall much more specific than those in the grade by grade objectives themselves.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. The standards are presented grade by grade, but they seem to be pretty much the same for K-4, 5-8, and 9-12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** No. They are organized in strands focusing on "communication" (which contains performance objectives for communicating effectively in "reading, speaking, writing, listening, and viewing" and for using the "conventions of written and spoken language"), "appreciation" (which contains objectives for valuing "language arts" and enjoying "oral, visual, and written language arts in a variety of forms and contexts"), and "application/integration" (which contains objectives for using oral, visual, and written language to "find, interpret, and apply information in all contexts" and to "solve problems and think critically"). This organizational scheme leaves did not lend itself well to addressing the specifics of each of the language processes.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** To some extent. Under "application/integration," which contains the most specific objectives in the document, both higher-level items (e.g., "summarize written information" and "respond to literature from a personal perspective") and lower-level skills ("interpret and use figurative language such as metaphors and similes") are mixed together.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** To some extent only. A few standards mention a few elements of listening and speaking, chiefly in very general terms ("share orally ... personal experiences, ideas, and opinions to inform, to persuade, and to entertain" and "identify and use ... speaking styles {voice, mood, persona,

tone} appropriate for audience, purpose, and form"). But use of discussion roles, participatory behaviors, and use of variously generated criteria are barely mentioned, if at all.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** To some extent only. Some reading objectives are listed for 5-8 (e.g., "identify main idea and supportive details in written information" and "identify written information as fact or opinion"), but the details are few in number and do not show much progressive development over the grades. There is no attention to the development of a reading vocabulary at all. It is mentioned as a separate item in 5-8, but with no details ("expand spoken and written vocabulary"). This is completely inadequate.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and cultural significance.** To some extent only. A few objectives for literary study appear over the grades, but they are few in number and provide few details. Most of the performance objectives are extremely broad in nature (e.g., "view and participate in dramatic and musical productions" and "listen to and read an abundance of traditional, classical, and contemporary literature"). The strength of Idaho's document is that it provides titles of a few specific works at each grade level as examples of what students might read to suggest an "appropriate activity" for demonstrating "progress toward achieving proficiency." These titles suggest some cultural specifics as well as the level of reading difficulty (e.g., Shirley Jackson's "Charles" in grade 8, *Lord of the Flies* in grade 10, and *Hamlet* in grade 12).

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** To some extent. General components of the writing processes are mentioned over the grades, as are rhetorical elements. But the details change only from one cluster of grade levels to another, few details are given, and there is nothing on such concepts as thesis, coherence, topic sentence, paragraph development, or transitions, or the use of variously generated criteria.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** To some extent. Idaho expects students to use oral and written language conventions, but no details are provided over the grades.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. None of these areas is mentioned.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** For the most part. Most of these areas are mentioned, but there is no mention of evaluating information across various sources or the development of research questions.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** Generally yes.

2. **They are specific.** To some extent only. Most are very general in nature.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** No. Most objectives under "appreciation" are either too general, too process-oriented, or unmeasurable altogether (e.g., "engage in verbal play," "acknowledge language variety as an element of cultural heritage," or "demonstrate knowledge of individuals, cultures, and customs reflected in literature"), as are most objectives under "communication" (e.g., "write to develop fluency and confidence," "write for a variety of audiences and situation," "write a variety of forms," or "share orally and in writing personal experiences." Many are nonacademic in nature as well (e.g., "increase self-esteem through success in reading and writing" and "listen to speakers from other ethnic and racial backgrounds"). Most of the measurable objectives appear under "application/integration" (e.g., "summarize, analyze, and synthesize information from written, oral, and visual sources") and under "conventions" (e.g., "use correct punctuation" and "use legible handwriting"), but even in these two areas, many are not measurable as stated (e.g., "use various methods to access information, such as interviewing, conducting library research, and using technological resources"). The scoring standards for the reading and writing performance assessments at grades 4, 8, and 12 contain some measurable criteria, but even here many are not

(e.g., "adapts rate and flexibility according to purpose and reading material," "sustains reading interest in advanced material," and "appreciates reading as a pleasurable recreational activity"). Some are also not quite comprehensible (e.g.," identifies and analyzes devices authors use in composing text"). How can students know what "devices" (whatever these may be) an author has used in composing a text? All they can analyze is what is in the text before their eyes.

4. **They are comprehensive.** To some extent. See the gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**
a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** To some extent only. The objectives differ chiefly from one educational cluster to another (from K-4, to 5-8, to 9-12), even though they are presented grade by grade, and most of the different areas of language development covered by the three strands do not have the kinds of details that make for very demanding expectations by the high-school grades. Too many are oriented to values and attitudes, not clear academic expectations.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** For the most part. Titles of specific works are offered at almost all grade levels to convey the reading level expected for that grade level.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples.** For the most part. Although specific writing samples are not offered, the standards to be used for writing assessments at grades 4, 8, and 12 are given, and they convey a good idea of the nature of growth in writing expected.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** To some extent. After each set of performance objectives, "sample progress indicators" are offered to suggest classroom activities that address the objectives. However, many of these are very general themselves.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** No. The objectives are not specific, comprehensive, or demanding in themselves, and the scoring standards for reading and writing are not differentiated from level to level. Without any literary/reading specifics required in any standards, it is not clear how the objectives or the scoring standards for the reading and writing assessments can lead to a common core of high academic expectations for Idaho students.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** No. This is not directly implied by the very general standards dealing with literary study.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** Yes. Although this is not implied by the objectives themselves or the sample progress indicators, the scoring standards for the reading performance assessment at grades 4, 8, and 12 want students to "extend ideas of text by making thoughtful inferences, drawing thorough conclusions, making extensive connections to own experiences and to the world."

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** Yes. The objectives for 9-12 want students to "identify and explore problems and issues in a variety of school and non-school related activities." This emphasis is also implied by many of the sample progress indicators in the higher grades (e.g., it is suggested that students write and deliver a persuasive speech on a contemporary issue after reading Marc Antony's speech in *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*).

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** No.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** To some extent. The objectives at all grade levels want students to "acknowledge language variety as an element of cultural heritage."

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** Yes. The document is heavily oriented to a process approach for reading and writing, to a reader-response approach for literary study, to learning all skills in context, and to a focus on students' values and attitudes. It even offers a number of "position statements" at the end of the document that promote a variety of trendy pedagogical ideas, none of which is supported by a body of respectable research (e.g., the statements on the problems faced by basic students in "tracked" classes at the high-school level). It is not an academically oriented document.

Illinois

Summary

Strengths: The document is written clearly and succinctly for the general public. It indicates that students are to use standard English for writing and speaking, and to receive systematic phonics instruction. It has coherently organized strands, with subcategories that articulate meaningful increases in academic expectations over the grades. Benchmarks are included for vocabulary development from the middle grades on, and reading, speaking, listening, writing, and research skills are adequately addressed at all educational levels. It specifies the study of American literature in the high-school grades.

Limitations: The standards contain no cultural or literary specifics beyond the bare mention of American literature at the high-school level. There is no explicit expectation for knowledge about the history and nature of the English language. It promotes the interpretation of literature within the narrow framework of students' personal experiences by implying that learning about the "techniques authors use to convey messages and evoke responses" inherently connects literature to their "lives and daily experiences."

Recommendations: First, the document should make clear that one of its goals is for students to become productive American citizens. It needs chiefly to spell out some cultural and literary specifics in its standards: some key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions will make academic expectations clear for students' knowledge of the nature, substance, and history of their literary and civic culture. It needs to eliminate the implication that literary understanding is necessarily connected to their daily lives and limited personal experiences.

	Illinois	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	29	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	12	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	24	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	22	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	87	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	3	8
Final Sum*	84	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Illinois

Date of draft examined: June 1996

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Yes. There is nothing to indicate otherwise.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** Probably yes. The standards for writing indicate the use of "standard written English." For listening and speaking, students are to use "grammatically correct language," although the word "English" is not mentioned.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays**. Yes. American literature is mentioned twice in the literature strand, but only in the objectives for early and late high-school students.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens**. For the most part. The introduction wants students top become proficient in language skills "essential to life as productive citizens." But there is nothing to suggest the country in which they will be citizens and pay taxes.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Yes. Early elementary benchmarks separate the use of "word analysis skills ... to recognize new words" from the use of "context clues and prior knowledge" to "comprehend unfamiliar words." The separation makes it clear that these strategies are not necessarily used simultaneously, and that students are to learn how to decode new words independently of the use of context clues.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** Yes. From early elementary school on, one benchmark expects students to "set, monitor and accomplish" quantitative and qualitative reading goals (e.g., books per month). Specifics are to be worked out individually.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments**. Unclear from this document.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. Benchmarks are offered for five grade clusters: early and late elementary, middle/junior-high school, and early and late high school.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** Yes. The benchmarks are organized under reading, literature, writing, listening and speaking, and research skills.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned**. Yes.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated and personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** Yes.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** Yes. There are clear progressions in reading skills through the grades, and benchmarks for vocabulary development appear from middle school on.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance.** For the most part. However, there is no mention of using different critical lenses, and there are no literary specifics offered beyond mention of American literature at the early and late high school level—no literary traditions, key authors, or works.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization**. Yes. These are addressed succinctly but adequately.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard En-**

glish conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation. Yes. More complex specifics are mentioned at increasingly higher grade levels.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today**. To some extent. Word origins are part of vocabulary development. But there is nothing on the nature and evolution of the English language or on the distinction between its oral and written forms.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases**. Yes.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** Yes. The benchmarks contain no jargon or obscure language.

2. **They are specific**. Yes.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** Yes. Such verbs as "identify," "use," "comprehend," "summarize," "classify," "analyze," "apply," "evaluate," "clarify," "compare," and "contrast" appear consistently throughout.

4. **They are comprehensive**. For the most part. See the gaps noted above.

5. **They are demanding.**
a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** For the most part. The progression in intellectual demand is clear in most areas. For example, under "demonstrate an understanding of literary elements and techniques," the benchmarks go from "identify" story elements of literary works, such as theme, setting, plot, and character, in the early elementary grades, to "identify" literary elements such as rhyme and meter, and literary techniques such as characterization, use of narration, and use of dialog in the upper elementary grades, to "identify and analyze" a variety of literary techniques such as figurative language, allusion, dialog, description, and word choice in middle school, to "evaluate the effective use of literary techniques" such as figurative language, allusion, word choice, style dialog, description, and symbolism in the early high school, to "compare ... works from various eras and countries and analyze complex literary devices" such as structures, images, forms, foreshadowing, flashbacks, progressive time, and digressive time in late high school. But the exact level of difficulty expected at the high-school level for reading and literary study is not clear; the demands would be clear, for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples.** No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark**. To some extent. Some examples of benchmarks are occasionally offered.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** For the most part. But without literary specifics and reading expectations geared to specific reading levels, it is not clear how the benchmarks can lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** No.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** For the most part. Although the meaning of this statement is not quite clear, the following goal for the literature strand seems to promote the interpretation of literature within the narrow framework of students' personal experiences: "By exploring the techniques that authors use to convey messages and evoke responses, students connect literature to their own lives and daily experiences." It is not at all clear how learning about such techniques as irony, humor, or oxymoron inherently connects literature to students' "lives and daily experiences": such techniques don't necessarily have a connection to anyone's daily experience. This statement may be an awkward way to avoid directly recommending that students relate what they read to their lived experiences.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** No.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** No. In fact, the goal for the literature strand implies that authors may have their own intentions for a literary text. "Literature study includes understanding the structure and intent of a short poem or a long, complex book."

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma**. No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** No.

Indiana

Summary

Strengths: The document is very readable and attractive in format. Commendably it notes as one of its goals the use of language to "participate in a democratic society." It contains a standard addressing positive attitudes toward reading, learning, language use, and participation in extra-curricular activities, such as drama and debate. It also specifies a large and useful variety of genres as goals for reading and writing.

Limitations: It implies that other languages will be spoken in the English language-arts class in addition to English. There is nothing to suggest that students will use standard English for oral language, and there is nothing to indicate the language in which students will demonstrate written language conventions. Literary study is very inadequately addressed in this document; it contains no literary and cultural specifics at all, not even a requirement that students are to study American literature. Expectations for the development of writing skills and research processes are also weak.
There are no expectations for knowledge about the history and nature of the English language, nor any mention of systematic word study and the development of a reading vocabulary.

Recommendations: The document needs to indicate that English is the language to be used in the English language-arts classroom and to expect all students to use standard English in their written work and, at least, for formal oral presentations. It also needs to clarify what country it expects students to participate in as citizens and to support systematic instruction in decoding skills. Above all, it needs to develop more academically oriented standards that are specific and measurable. The document needs to move far beyond a writing and reading process approach to learning and to reduce drastically the number of standards that focus on processes, values, and attitudes. Details need to be spelled out for systematic word study at all grade levels, and for the study of the history and nature of the English language. In addition, the document needs to spell out some cultural and literary specifics in its standards, such as some key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions, to make clear its academic expectations for students' reading level at different educational levels as well as their knowledge of the nature and history of this country's literary and civic culture.

	Indiana	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	15	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	7	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	8	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	9	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	39	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	4	8
Final Sum*	35	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Indiana

Date of draft examined: Spring 1992

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.**
Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** No. The document includes a position statement of the National Council of Teachers of English on English/Language Arts practices which indicates that students should have "guidance and frequent opportunities" among other things to "bring their own cultural values, languages, and knowledge to their classroom reading and writing." The introduction to the document states that this position statement is one of the "supporting components" of the document. And, in fact, not one standard mentions English as the language that students are learning.

3. It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing. To some extent. The introduction indicates that students are to follow accepted conventions of written language, but it does not specify what language. There is nothing in the introduction or the standards to suggest the use of conventions for oral language.

4. It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays. No. American literature is not mentioned in the introduction to the document or in the standards.

5. It expects students to become literate American citizens. For the most part. The introduction to the document indicates that one of the three goals of the English language-arts curriculum is to develop language users who can use language to "participate in a democratic society." But the specific democracy in which they are to be participating citizens is not mentioned.

6. It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials. No. The standards for reading list semantic, structural, and phonetic cues "to construct meaning" in that order. In addition, the introduction to the document sets up a strawman by stating that students are to make sense by "focusing on meaning rather than simple decoding," implying that a whole-language approach is to be used by teachers rather than systematic instruction in phonics followed up by practice in decodable texts as well as in high-quality children's literature.

7. It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality. For the most part. One of its broad standards on "attitudes toward language and learning" expects students to select reading materials from classroom libraries and school library centers at most grade levels. However, it does not explicitly expect them to do regular independent reading on their own, nor does indicate quantity.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. They are presented in clusters from K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** For the most part. The standards are grouped in eight categories. One is for attitudes toward reading, a second focuses chiefly on reading process skills, a third on lists of different types of reading materials that would be reasonable to expect students to read at the different educational levels, a fourth on chiefly writing process skills, a fifth on lists of different types of writing students might do at the different educational levels, a sixth on skills in informational and persuasive reading, a seventh on listening and speaking skills, and an eighth on some aspects of literary study. Types of reading and writing in themselves do not constitute meaningful categories of standards, nor do they provide clear guides to quality.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** No. Only three or four new objectives appear at successively higher educational levels, and they are a real mixed bag. For example, the three new objectives added for 3-5 to further the eighth strand—the recognition of the "interrelatedness of language, literature, and culture "—are "understanding the elements of story structure—theme, characters, setting, and plot; understanding the structure of expository text, and comparing literature and arts from different cultures." It's not clear why the second of these three is in this strand rather than in the sixth strand, and the third objective is excessively broad as well as obscure in its focus for 3-5.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and**

Informal speech. To some extent. Several discussion skills and tasks are mentioned, but these are skimpy in nature and there are no details on individual speech or on the use of various criteria for evaluating informal or formal groups or formal individual presentations

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** For the most part. The progressive development of reading skills and the reading of many different genres are addressed, rather skimpily, through the second, fifth, and sixth strands, but there is almost no detail on different reading strategies for academic, occupational, or civic purposes, and there is no mention of a reading vocabulary anywhere.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and cultural significance.** To some extent. Literary study is barely addressed in these standards. There is brief mention of story elements in 3-5, features of literary genres and "functions of common literary conventions" in 6-8, and the reading of "some of the recognized masterpieces and authors in 9-12." And that is about all. There is no systematic mention of reading, interpreting, and evaluating literature in the middle- and high-school grades. Nor is there any mention of specific genres of literature, literary devices, interpretive lenses, or literary traditions.

4. The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization. To some extent. Writing process skills **are** mentioned, as **are** a variety of writing genres. Such concepts as thesis or controlling idea, transitions, topic sentences, and paragraph development are not mentioned The most demanding standard in 9-12 asks only that students revise for "clarity, coherence, economy, and voice." This is the only time clarity and coherence are even mentioned. There is no mention of the use of any kind of criteria for evaluation or different modes of organization.

5. The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation. To some extent. Editing for usage, mechanics, and spelling are mentioned as part of the writing process. But no further details are given anywhere. In 9-12, students are to complete final drafts with "accepted language conventions," but not even the name of the language is given.

6. The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today. No. None of these topics are mentioned in these standards.

7. The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases. To some extent. Synthesizing information is mentioned, as is the use of dictionaries, handbooks, and technology to support the writing process. That is all.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** Yes. What is there is clear in meaning.

2. **They are specific.** To some extent. The lists of types of reading and writing genres required are specific, and there are a number of specific informational reading skills. But many others are very general, such as "understanding implied meanings," "understanding how language is used to influence," "listening and responding," "storytelling," "comparing literature and arts from different cultures," "discussing relationships between form and content," "understanding how contemporary writing reflects past literary traditions," "critically examining reading material," and "reading some of the recognized masterpieces and authors."

3. They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools). To some extent only. Many are unmeasurable because they are process standards (e.g., "using background knowledge to construct meaning," "making connections to prior knowledge," "varying reading speed," "monitoring understanding," and "selecting topics of personal interest." Others are not academic learning standards (e.g., using literature as one stimulus for writing, "discussing personal experiences"). Some are not worth measuring, such as "composing collaboratively"; there is no body of evidence that such activity improves the quality of writing. Some are simply unmeasurable: e.g., "enjoying works from their own culture and other cultures."

4. **They are comprehensive.** To some extent only. See the gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of in creasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** To some extent only. There are some progressions in difficulty in some areas such as informational reading, but in others they are barely perceptible (e.g., use of writing strategies). And while the two strands that contain nothing but lists of genres tell us what the document writers want students to read and write at different educational levels, they do not tell us what students are expected to learn how to do in order to read or write these genres. Anyone can generate a list of the kinds of reading and writing that students should be able to do when they graduate from high school (such as reading newspapers, magazines, directions, video disks, and routine business documents, or writing messages, letters, lists, and charts); the function of standards is to describe for parents and other citizens the quality of what students will be expected to read and write and the kinds of intellectual processes they will be engaged in and with what kind of material over the grades to enable them to achieve that level of quality. Rarely does an Indiana standard use a word like analyze or evaluate; for the most part in 9-12, students simply understand, identify, use, choose, express, or just read.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No.

c. **They Illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples.** No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** To some extent. The two strands that contain lists clarify to some extent what Indiana expects students to be able to read and write.

6. Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend. No. The contents of Indiana's standards are so relatively undemanding or so unconnected to specific levels of reading and writing as well as some literary specifics that they are unlikely to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for its students. The expectation for 9-12 students to read a "broad variety of literature, magazines, and newspapers written for a general adult audience; technical procedures, as in computer use; and routine business documents" is not an expression of a standard or benchmark that points to quality. It may be the case that this reflects the reading of a vast majority of American adults, but a school's reach should always exceed its grasp.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** No. This implication does not come through in these standards.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** No. This is not required in the standards.

3. The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.
No. This is not implied in the standards.

4. The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence. No. This is not implied by these standards.

5. The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior. No. No examples of activities or writing are offered.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** No.

7. The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow. Yes. It is clear that what is desired is a whole-language pedagogy for beginning reading, and a focus on reading and writing processes.

Kansas

Summary

Strengths: The document is organized in coherent strands. It expects students to study both American literature (by name) as well as world literature, and it also expects them to be able to use standard English for both writing and speaking.

Limitations: The document lacks clear, specific, and measurable standards. Its standards in all areas are very weak—almost completely process-oriented and heavily value-laden or attitudinal in nature. There is nothing on the development of a reading vocabulary or on knowledge about the nature and history of the English language.

Recommendations: The document needs almost complete rewriting—to improve the general language of the document, to upgrade its standards, and to eliminate all its anti-literary and anti-academic requirements, recommendations, or implications. To begin with, the document needs to indicate that English is the language to be used in the English language-arts classroom. It also needs to clarify what country it expects students to participate in as citizens and that they are to receive systematic instruction in phonics. Above all, it needs academically oriented standards that are specific and measurable. The document must move far beyond a writing and reading process approach to learning, and reduce drastically the standards that focus on processes, values, and attitudes. Details need to be spelled out for systematic word study at all grade levels, and for the study of the history and nature of the English language. In addition, the document needs to spell out some cultural and literary specifics in its standards, such as some key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions, to make clear its academic expectations for students' knowledge of the nature and history of their literary and civic culture.

	Kansas	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	7	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	8	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	6	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	2	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	23	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	14	8
Final Sum*	9	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Kansas

Date of draft examined: May 1996

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** No. It is written almost completely in unintelligible educationese. For example, under the standard for "skills in viewing different types of presentations," high-school students are to "reflect on, interpret and evaluate multiple messages and purposes intended by the presenters" (do all "presenters" have "multiple messages and purposes?"), "reflect on the viewer's purposes for viewing" (is this more important than the presenter's purposes?), and "demonstrate critical thinking by making decisions about the truth of what they see" (are they to decide upon the accuracy of what they are viewing based on quick personal judgments, and if so, is this a demonstration of "critical thinking"?). The language in this document often reads like an unintentional satire of political correctness. For example, its goal is "to prepare each person with the living, learning, and working skills and values necessary for caring, productive and fulfilling participation in our evolving, global society." The introduction acknowledges that the preparation of this document was funded by part of a $400,000 grant from the U.S. Office of Education and was aided by the work of five nationally known consultants.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** No. Standard 3 under Outcome 4 indicates that students are to "recognize that the various languages and dialects of a multicultural society express the human experience unique to a people." To achieve this standard, they are to demonstrate "in their speaking and writing that they value their own language and dialect" and to understand "the usefulness of all languages and dialects." It is not clear how many different languages and dialects are to be valued simultaneously in Kansas' English language-arts classrooms. Kansas has also chosen to eliminate "English Language" from the title of its document and to call it "Curricular Standards for Communication Arts." English language-arts teachers are now "communication arts teachers."

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing**. For the most part. Standard 2 under Outcome 4 indicates that learners are to demonstrate only "that they can use standard American English in their speaking and writing," not that they will use it most or all of the time. This is the only standard in this document that expects students to demonstrate only that they can do something. The others all expect use or understanding.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** Yes. From middle school on, students are expected to read American literature by name.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** No. Nowhere is the use of literacy skills for informed participation in American civic life mentioned as a goal of these standards.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** No. All reading strategies are combined in one sentence in the reading standards: "develop a variety of reading and organizational strategies to gain meaning, such as prior knowledge, word recognition, word meaning, inferencing and text structure."

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** No. This is not mentioned in the document.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments**. No. The final page of the document indicates that its writers believe that "determining growth in some of the most important outcomes, standards, and benchmarks presented here depends on teacher observation and informal assessment." They apparently find that "responsible and sufficient measurement for instruction."

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels**. Yes. The standards are presented in three clusters: elementary, middle, and high school.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** Yes. They are grouped in five categories: reading, listening, and viewing; writing and speaking; literature; language; and technology. In the categories that combine language processes, a different standard addresses a different language process.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** No. Standards for demonstrating knowledge and skills are regularly mixed with standards that deal with behaviors, values, and attitudes.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-**

generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech. To some extent. Students are expected to develop some skills for group discussion and individual presentation. However, there are few specifics, such as asking questions to gain information, learning how to gain the floor, learning how to formulate and revise discussion rules for specific purposes, and how to evaluate and improve group productivity. Nor do students use prescribed criteria for evaluating group discussions or the formal speech of others. At all times they are to use their own criteria. Incomprehensibly, students are expected to demonstrate "respect for differences in attitude, behavior, values and beliefs within formal and informal groups" without any consideration of what and when the attitudes, behaviors, values, and beliefs of others may not be worthy of respect.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes**. To some extent. The reading and viewing standards mention the comprehension, analysis, and evaluation of written or viewed material. But there is almost no indication of the progressive development of reading and viewing skills, and no mention of developing a reading vocabulary at all. Nor do the standards address specific types of textual features or types of reading materials.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance.** To some extent. The standards mention all of the above items in general terms only. No specifics are ever given—for literary elements, genres, and critical theories, or for key authors, literary traditions, or titles. Commendably, students from the middle grades on are to read American and world literature, and to "demonstrate a familiarity with the literature of diverse cultures and with the work of both men and women writers." In addition, they are to "demonstrate a knowledge of the contexts in which the literature is produced, such as cultural, political, economic, social, biographical and philosophical." But such a standard will undoubtedly be difficult to put into practice since there is no expectation in the reading, viewing, and listening standards that students are ever to acquire anything more than skills or the use of processes and strategies.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** To some extent. A few generalities are addressed. But most of the focus is on writing processes, and in the six traits of an "analytical rating guide" offered to show what is expected in student writing from K-12, there is no mention of a controlling idea (or thesis) or coherence.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** To some extent. The benchmark for conventions mentions only that students are to recognize and demonstrate or apply the conventions of Standard American English in writing and speaking. But no further details are offered at any educational level.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. The document attempts to deal with language structure, but never specifies the English language as the object of language study. It offers distorted and almost unintelligible statements on language change such as "that language accepts a number of different meanings at the same time, is constantly changing and varies across time and culture" and "that part of the richness of language is that meaning varies depending on the experience of the audience." No language is so chaotic at any one point in time that its words can mean a variety of things and change in meaning constantly; no language could function as a communication system if most of its words had no clear referents and their meanings were in a constant state of flux. Nor is it clear why a presumed dependence of variation in meaning on experience is testimony to the richness of language or that meaningful variation in meaning is even caused by experience. Other reasons are more obvious, such as the deliberate ambiguity of much literary language, and the lack of clarity in much poorly written or spoken language. The document never says outright that students should study the history of the English language and the nature of its vocabulary. Nor does it adumbrate the distinction between written and oral language, even though it offers a whole standard addressing dialect. It wants high school students to understand "how a dialect may come to be called the standard dialect," even though few if any K-12 educators ever use the term. Nor does the document in its standard on conventions.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phe-**

nomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases. To some extent only. This area is very inadequately addressed. In a puzzling contradiction of pedagogical philosophy, there is no mention of research processes at all; the document writers are interested only in research papers "that conform with standard conventions of presentation" (whatever they may be). Despite its suggestion to the contrary, all sources of information for research (such as a dictionary or expert informers) are not technological in nature, and these other sources are not mentioned in this document at all. There is no expectation for students to develop open-ended questions or to evaluate the quality of the information they obtain from electronic media (and from other sources as well).

D. Quality of standards

1. **They are clear**. To some extent. Many ask students to reflect on something. It is not clear what reflection entails. Some do not make sense, such as "demonstrate knowledge of the literary conventions of the time which define the context in which various literature is produced." How do literary conventions define a context? See also C.6 above for other examples.

2. **They are specific**. No. They are rarely specific. Many are simply general curriculum objectives.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** No. Most are completely unmeasurable. Many benchmarks are completely nonacademic in nature (e.g., "demonstrate respect for differences in attitude, behavior, values and beliefs within formal and informal groups," "recognize the rights and responsibilities of free speech," and "accept appropriate criticism, disagreements, suggestions, and compliments"). Others focus on process and/or depend upon totally individualized criteria (e.g., "demonstrate critical thinking by making a decision about the truth of what they hear," "reflect on and fulfill their own purposes for learning through listening," "vary approach to viewing depending upon viewer's purpose," "reflect on and explain their success in learning information and expressing ideas," "describe their attitudes toward what they are reading and the effect these attitudes have on their purposes," "identify a variety of purposes for reading," "use language that is sensitive to gender, age, race and ethnic background," or "use appropriate means to communicate strong feelings and resolve conflict through negotiation and compromise"). Very few are susceptible of external consensual judgment. A large number of benchmarks are socially irresponsible in that they encourage narcissistic and solipsistic learning. Only under the technology standards are there potentially measurable benchmarks ("sort information and sources as they relate to a specific topic or purpose" or "use organizational features of electronic information, library and interlibrary catalog databases to locate and select relevant information"), but most are worded here too broadly for effective measurement.

4. **They are comprehensive.** No. See all the gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** No. There are almost no differences from level to level, and there are no literary specifics to suggest the levels of reading difficulty demanded by the standards.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level**. No.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples**. No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark**. To some extent. About a dozen classroom vignettes are provided that demonstrate the learning of the benchmarks. See D.6 and section E below for some of the problems with these vignettes.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** No. In addition to all the problems with the specificity and measurability of the standards, there are no literary specifics or reading levels indicated for different educational levels. This document cannot lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all Kansas students. The standards focus almost consistently on processes, strategies, feelings, and attitudes. Indeed, if the vignettes offered in the document serve as pedagogical models, academic achievement is apt to go down in Kansas. For example, several highlight activities in which students were paired for collaborative learning. In one, a ninth grader was paired with a kindergartner to produce a story for kindergartners; this is not challenging language learning for a ninth grader. In another, two middle-school girls were paired for a response to two short stories. They spent most of their time writing down each other's thoughts about the stories. Each wrote not in response to rich written language, but in response to informal oral language about written language—a poor language learning experience. In an elementary activity drawing on exposure to French Impressionist painting, the paintings were used as the springboard for story-starters supplied by the teacher, not for using the information given the students about the paintings and their style. In a high-school vignette, the teacher read an elementary level story about violence and racial injustice to stimulate study of the author and Harlem, and then asked the students to rewrite the story, which is written in dialect, into standard

English (an extremely low-level, time-wasting activity for high-school students) in order to evaluate its suitability for the story (as if black authors write only in dialect). In a high-school vignette on career interests, one of the students wrote up her research in the form of a booklet for use by elementary-school students (not by adults). On the other hand, two of the best examples of classroom activities are the letter to a museum director about moving fossils and the research on penguins, but they are with kindergarten and first grade students. As the vignettes increase in grade level, their intellectual and linguistic demands tend to decelerate.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** To some extent. This is implied by the notion that students are to "demonstrate knowledge of the literary conventions of the time which define the context in which various literature is produced."

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** To some extent. Although this is not stated directly in the standards, it is implied by the benchmark "that multiple interpretations are a result of the differences in personal experiences and backgrounds" and by the few vignettes that are offered in the document. One vignette on the reading of Thoreau's *Walden* notes how the student connected his ideas "to her own life" and how her personal responses to the literature were to help her "use language to construct her own meanings" as well as to "understand the meaning of others" and that the students were to "reflect on their own interpretation in comparison to a classic interpretation" (whatever a classic interpretation is).

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** To some extent. Although it is not stated directly in the standards, it is implied in a vignette about the reading of a story in an African-American dialect about violence and racial injustice.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** For the most part. Multiple interpretations are not suggested for informational reading, but they are in a benchmark in the literature strand and are pointed out in the vignette on *Walden*. Even though the elementary school benchmark states that "literature may have more than one interpretation supported by details from the text," it offers nothing to qualify this statement. Will a few details do, no matter their quality or the presence of counterevidence?

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** Yes. Students are to believe, among other things, "that multiple interpretations are a result of the differences in personal experiences and background" when reading literature, "that language accepts a number of different meanings at the same time, is constantly changing and varies across time and cultures," "that the various languages and dialects of a multicultural society express the human experience unique to a people" (as if many experiences are not common to many people regardless of language differences) and that "technological resources such as e-mail, list servers and bulletin boards have their own accepted practices of behavior" (whatever that means).

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow**. Yes. The document consistently encourages teachers to focus on process, not substance, and to develop a self-centered, solipsistic (or at best peer-dominated) view of learning in their students. Under the standard for speaking, students are to "create and use their own criteria for assessing oral expression" at all levels of education. Under the literature standards, students are to "create and use their own criteria for evaluating and appreciating literature." For writing, they are expected to use "developed criteria for analyzing their own and others' writing" in the middle grades, but it is not clear who developed these criteria—the students or their teachers and other adults. Benchmarks under a standard expecting students to "reflect upon their learning through writing and speaking" want students to identify their "individual learning style and refine the skill of adapting learning strategies to the demands of particular learning situation" and to "refine the ability to reflect on the effectiveness of their own communication process," both of which are self-defined (and thus unmeasurable) benchmarks. Students do not seem to be expected to refer to adult-formulated standards, or the standards of experienced or more knowledgeable others, to guide their intellectual development.

Massachusetts

Summary

Strengths: The document is written clearly for the general public. It makes clear its expectations for the use of English in the English language-arts classroom and for the use of standard English in conventions for both writing and speaking. It provides specific titles as examples for many of its gradespan standard to indicate expected reading level as well as literary and cultural specifics. It also provides two suggested core lists of authors in its appendices to serve as the basis for the construction of balanced literature programs K-12 and English language arts/reading assessments. Development of a reading vocabulary is addressed in detail through the grades.

Limitations: Informational reading is not adequately addressed in the upper grades because it is combined with literature in one strand. Research processes and skills are separated from resources in the media section.

Recommendations: The document needs to add a standard addressing expectations for regular and independent reading. It should also be reorganized so that reading, literary study, and research are in separate strands, with each developed in appropriate detail. Above all, some literary and cultural specifics need to be built into the standards themselves.

	Massachusetts	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	29	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	11	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	25	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	29	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	94	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	0	8
Final Sum*	94	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Massachusetts*

Date of draft examined: January 1997

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators**. Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used**. Yes. The document provides examples of second-language learners using only English in the English language arts class, and it also notes that all students who begin kindergarten or first grade in Massachusetts are expected to be able to read and write at grade level in English by the end of third grade.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** Yes. The introductory material indicates its expectation that all students will acquire standard English for speaking and writing, and one language standard explicitly expects the use of standard English conventions.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** Yes. It is acknowledged in the examples for the standards and elsewhere on many occasions.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** Yes. Although the phrase itself does not appear, the introductory material notes as a goal of the English language-arts curriculum helping students find common ground to prepare them for responsible participation in our civic life. One appendix shows how teachers can connect the study of American historical documents with literature, linking specific works at different educational levels to the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and selected readings from *The Federalist Papers*.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Yes. One section of the introductory material to the document spells this out.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grade, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** To some extent. The introductory material indicates that teachers "need to encourage independent reading in and outside of class," and that librarians, parents, and other family members play a role in making reading an important part of home life. But it does not make this expectation completely explicit, nor suggest amounts of outside reading.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments**. Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. Standards are presented for four educational levels: K-4, 5-8, 9-10, and 11-12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** For the most part. They are grouped in strands labeled language, literature, composition, and media. Informational reading appears in the literature strand but is distinguished from literary study. Research processes appear in the composition strand. Media deals with a variety of topics and is not a coherent strand.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** Yes.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** For the most part. The standards address most essential elements of listening and speaking. They do not mention use of peer-generated criteria for evaluating informal talk or established criteria for formal talk.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** For the most part. Because all reading strategies are listed in a chart in the beginning of the document, it is not clear what a reasonable developmental progression in the use of these strategies might be for informational reading. Development of an advanced reading vocabulary through both contextual and noncontextual approaches is explicitly expected in the standards.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature.**

*As indicated in Section III: Development of the Criteria, I was the co-chair of the 12-member committee that prepared this document. Although others may see flaws in it that I have missed, I have tried to be as objective and as critical as I could be in this analysis.

They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance. For the most part. The standards expect students to learn about various literary elements, genres, responses, and schools of literary criticism. However, the standards contain only a few literary specifics (students are expected in grades 9-10 to "use their knowledge of Greek, Latin, and Norse mythology; the Bible; and other works often alluded to in British and American literature to understand the meanings of new words"). Most literary specifics are in suggested lists in two appendices. One appendix lists key authors (and a few works) that may be considered to comprise the literary and cultural heritage of English-speaking people. The other appendix lists authors of contemporary American literature as well as of world literature past and present. Teachers are advised to draw from both lists, but neither constitutes a required list.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** Yes. The standards address all these areas in composition and media.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** Yes. These are addressed in some detail through the grades.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** Yes. Standards in the language strand address all these items. Students are expected to learn the history of the English language, how dialects arise, and how the oral forms of English differ from its standard written form. Introductory material in the document points out its almost completely uniform nature across the world today and the fact that change occurs chiefly in the addition of new words to its lexicon.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases**. Yes. Standards address this area in the composition, reading, and media strands.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear**. Yes.

2. **They are specific**. Yes. The main standard is a general statement, but the gradespan standards are specific.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** Yes.

4. **They are comprehensive**. For the most part. See the gap noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding**.

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** For the most part. Gradespan standards indicate what is expected at the end of each of the four educational levels and show increasing intellectual complexity. Examples for each gradespan standard usually contain titles of works that suggest the level of reading or the sophistication of the writing required for their achievement. But the level of difficulty suggested by these titles is not built into the standards themselves as they would be if a standard required the reading, for example, of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** Yes. Massachusetts indicates the reading level expected for achieving its standards by providing (1) examples of specific works for each gradespan standard, (2) lists of suggested authors in two appendices in groupings that correlate with its gradespans, and (3) sample passages at end of grade 3 and beginning of grade 4 reading levels in an introductory section on beginning reading and writing to suggest what is expected by the end of grade 3.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples.** No. No writing samples are provided in this document.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** Yes.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** For the most part. No

reading levels, literary works, authors, or literary traditions are specifically mentioned in the standards themselves, only in the examples and in the suggested reading lists. Thus, their overall contents in themselves are not sufficiently specific to lead to a common core of high academic expectations. They can do so only in conjunction with reading levels and works by authors suggested in examples and in the suggested reading lists in the document's appendices.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** No.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences**. No.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** No.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence**. No.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior**. No.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** No. The document states explicitly that it does not intend to "promote one approach over others." It explains that teachers "should judge when it is best to use direct instruction, inductive learning, Socratic dialogues, or formal lecture," as well as when it is "appropriate for students to work individually, in small groups, or as a whole class."

Michigan

Summary

Strengths: It contains fine and interesting standards in strands labeled "Genre and Craft of Language" and "Depth of Understanding." The first deals with the identification and use of the characteristics of various genres; the second shows how the development of a thesis takes place.

Limitations: Too many standards are neither clear, nor specific, nor measurable. The standards for listening and speaking are not comprehensive, and there is nothing on the development of a reading vocabulary. Nor is the research process handled clearly or well. The literature standards totally lack literary and cultural specifics; there is no mention even of American literature. The examples for many benchmarks need revision; they do not make sense in themselves, nor do they seem to relate to the benchmark. As a whole, the document is excessively repetitious and verbose.

Recommendations: The document needs first to make clear that it expects English to be the language of the English language-arts classroom and that students are to use standard English in writing and, at least, in formal speaking. It also needs to clarify what country it expects students to participate in as citizens and that they will receive systematic instruction in phonics. Above all, it needs to develop more academically oriented standards that are specific, comprehensive, and measurable, and to remove any anti-literary and anti-academic implications. A discipline-based scheme for organizing the standards would make the document less repetitious, more coherent, shorter, and more comprehensible, and make existing gaps more visible. Details need to be spelled out for systematic word study at all grade levels, and students should be expected to study the history of the English language. The research process needs to be more adequately addressed. In addition, the document needs to spell out some cultural and literary specifics in its standards at all educational levels, such as some key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions, to make clear its academic expectations for students' reading level as well as their knowledge of the nature and history of this country's literary and civic culture. The document would greatly benefit English language-arts/reading teachers by reducing its excessive focus on social issues, for which they are not prepared by training to address well.

	Michigan	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	13	9
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	6	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	14	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	7	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	40	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	13	8
Final Sum*	27	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Michigan

Date of draft examined: ***October 1996***

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** To some extent. The document is cluttered with jargon, obscure language, and examples that don't make sense in relation to their "benchmarks." A benchmark like "describe and use effective listening and speaking behaviors that enhance verbal communication and facilitate the construction of meaning" does not say much to the ordinary citizen. Such benchmarks as "demonstrate their ability to use different voices in their oral and written communication to persuade, inform, entertain, and inspire their audiences" and "evaluate the power of using multiple voices" raise questions about the kind of mental development the document is interested in. Others are simply incomprehensible as they are written, such as "investigate and demonstrate understanding of the cultural and historical contexts of themes, issues, and our common heritage as depicted in literature and other texts" or "analyze how cultures interact with one another in literature and other texts, and describe the consequences of the interaction as it relates to our common heritage." In addition, the entire document is exceedingly repetitious and verbose.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Unclear. The vision statement for this document indicates that "the insights we gain enable us to understand our cultural, linguistic, and literary heritages." It is not clear how reading a text written in the English language can give students insights into other linguistic heritages. Nor is it clear how students can use "the English language arts to understand and appreciate the commonalities and differences within social, cultural, and linguistic communities." One normally understands a linguistic community by studying its language. If the understanding of more than one linguistic community takes place in the English language-arts class, then English is not the only language being used.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** For the most part. The document expects all students to "use the English language effectively," so it would seem that the conventions expected in writing would be English-language conventions. But it is not clear if students are to use standard English conventions in their speaking.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** No. There is nothing in this document to suggest the existence of American literature. There is reference to "our common heritage," but without anything to clarify what that heritage consists of, or whom the "our" refers to. A short description of the literature standard talks about "exploring texts that our ancestors felt important," but we are not told whose "ancestors" the writers have in mind.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** To some extent. The document's ultimate goal is "personal, social, occupational, and civic literacy." But this seems to encompass nothing more specific than an understanding of various "social, cultural, and linguistic communities" and an "understanding of the world." There is nothing in the document or the standards to suggest that it aims to produce literate American citizens.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Unclear. The document runs all word recognition strategies together in a single sentence without making distinctions among them. In the Meaning and Communication strand, students are to "employ multiple strategies to decode words as they construct meaning, including the use of phonemic awareness, letter-sound associations, picture cures, context clues, and other word recognition aids."

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** No. There is nothing to indicate the need for students to do regular independent reading on their own through the grades.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. They are offered for four groups of grade levels: early elementary, later elementary, middle school, and high school.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** To some extent. Three of the ten "content" standards focus on familiar subdisciplines in the English language arts: Language, Literature, and Inquiry and Research. Nevertheless, literary study is actually split into three standards: the humanistic content of literature is in a category called Literature, the aesthetic elements of literature are in a category called Genre and Craft of Language, which includes language conventions, and the idea of universal themes is in a category called Depth of Understanding. Several "content" standards, such as Ideas in Action and Skills and Processes, have no disciplinary history behind them at all. In addition, most

of the ten standards attempt to address all language processes simultaneously. As a result, the differences between reading and writing are obfuscated, as are the differences between oral and written language skills.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** To some extent. Higher- and lower-level objectives in different subdisciplines often seem to be interspersed under one "content" standard. For example, in the content standard called Voice, one benchmark is on identifying "elements of effective communication," another is on "experimenting with various voices," a third is exploring works of "different authors, speakers, and illustrators to determine how they present ideas and feelings to evoke different responses," and a fourth is to "explain their selection of materials for different purposes and audiences."

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** No. The document does not present standards on listening and speaking in a clearly marked strand, and I find no specific benchmarks on various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, or use of criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** For the most part. This area seems to be covered by various benchmarks under Genre and Craft of Language, Skills and Processes, and Meaning and Communication. However, there seem to be no benchmarks aimed at the development or acquisition of an advanced reading or writing vocabulary.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance.** For the most part. Reading, interpreting, and critically evaluating literature seem to be addressed by the benchmarks under four different standards. However, the elements of poetry do not seem to be well addressed, and there is no mention of using different interpretative lenses. There are no literary specifics in the standards or benchmarks, nor any clue as to what "our common heritage" refers to.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** For the most part. Expectations for communication and expression in writing are addressed to some extent by benchmarks under Content Standards 2, 7, 8, 10, and 11. Development of a thesis is extremely well spelled out. But there do not seem to be any benchmarks dealing with paragraph construction, effective transitions, or the use of topic sentences. With no one strand dealing with expectations for development in writing, some of the key features seem to have gotten lost.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** For the most part. These are addressed, somewhat repetitiously, under Content Standards 2 and 8, and with some details. The document seems to suggest that conventions are to be observed in formal talk or writing, but it is not clear.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** To some extent. The benchmarks expect some attention to word origins, variations in language patterns, and differences between formal and informal English. But they do not address the history of the English language adequately and do not point out the relative stability of the written form of English.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** To some extent. This is a relatively focused area in this document. But little attention is given the problem of evaluating the accuracy and usefulness of sources of information available through the media. Moreover, the way in which the development of a hypothesis or thesis is presented under the standard called Inquiry and Research contradicts what is (correctly) suggested under Depth of Understanding. To prepare to do research on a topic, one does not first "narrow the questions to a clear focus, and create a thesis or a hypothesis." One explores the material dealing with the questions first, sifts through them, and only then comes up with a tentative hy-

pothesis or controlling idea, as is suggested in Depth of Understanding. It is also not clear how "election ballots, hypertext, and magazines and booklets including graphics" are examples of the benchmark "use different means of developing and presenting conclusions based on the investigation of an issue or problem to an identified audience." Other examples in this standard are equally puzzling.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** To some extent. The language of many is so jargony, obscure, or verbose that it is difficult to understand what is intended by them (e.g., "develop standards to analyze how the style and substance of personal messages reflect the values of a communicator" or "develop understanding of individual, shared, and academic standards used for different purposes and contexts").

2. **They are specific.** To some extent. Many are very general ("explore and reflect on universal themes and substantive issues" or "function as literate individuals in varied contexts within their lives in and beyond the classroom" or "document and enhance a developing voice through multiple media").

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** To some extent. Far too many benchmarks are process-oriented, obscure, or excessively general. Verbs frequently used are "explore," "employ multiple strategies to," "write fluently," "express," "demonstrate flexibility," "discuss," "create," "respond," and "recognize that." These verbs do not lead to measurability.

4. **They are comprehensive.** To some extent. The gaps are noted above.

5. **They are demanding.**
a. They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address. To some extent. Most benchmarks under Genre and Craft of Language, which deals with identification and use of the characteristics of various genres, are interesting and get progressively more demanding. So too with some benchmarks under Depth of Understanding. But many other benchmarks show little if any progression in academic expectation from one educational level to another. Nor do they seem to cover all important aspects of a particular area of expectation like composition or speaking and listening. Nor do they contain any literary specifics to indicate level of difficulty. The intellectual demands would be clear, in the high-school years for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level. No.

c. They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples. No.

d. For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark. To some extent. Many examples are not useful, however, such as those under Ideas in Action. In some cases, the example is mystifying. For example, high-school students are to "use an understanding of how language patterns and vocabularies transmit culture and affect meaning in formal and informal situations." The meaning of this benchmark is either trivial or obscure. But the example offered ("An example is identifying distinctions in the verbal and non-verbal communication behaviors of national or world leaders.") sheds no light on what is intended. Nor is it clear what non-verbal communication behaviors are.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** To some extent. Given all the problems mentioned above, the process-oriented nature of many standards, and the lack of any specifics for literary content or reading levels, it is not clear how there can be a common core of academic expectations across schools in Michigan.

E. Negative Criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** Yes. Most of the benchmarks that refer to "cultures" imply a monolithic view of them. This is implied by the phrase "our common heritage" and by the notion that works can "represent" a culture.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** Yes. Content Standard 10 asks students to "apply knowledge, ideas, and issues drawn from texts to their lives and the lives of others." Among other things, it wants high-school students to "use themes and central ideas in literature and other texts to generate solutions to problems and formulate perspectives on issues in their own lives." Elsewhere, it wants middle-grade students to "identify and discuss how the tensions among characters, communities, themes, and issues in literature and other texts are related to one's own experience."

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** Yes. This is expected in Content Standard 10. A focus on social issues also appears in some benchmarks in the content standard for Literature.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** To some extent. It is possible to interpret Content Standard 12 ("All students will develop and apply personal, shared, and academic criteria for the enjoyment, appreciation, and evaluation of their own and others' oral, written, and visual texts.") as implying that personal standards may differ from "shared" and "academic" criteria. In one benchmark, high-school students are to "apply diverse standards ... to evaluate whether a communication is truthful, responsible, and ethical for a specific context." Apparently, what is truthful is not something that can be reliably determined but depends on what standards one applies.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** No.

Minnesota

Summary

Strengths: The document is written clearly for the general public and makes it clear that its standards are for the English language. It contains two excellent standards on the use of public parliamentary procedures and public speaking. Technical and practical reading and writing are given a great deal of attention in this document.

Limitations: Literary study gets short shrift in this document; it is submerged in a category that is about processing "complex information." Because reading, viewing, and listening are grouped together in the standards, it is not clear how much students need to accomplish through reading itself. Academic writing is skimpily described in contrast to the details offered for technical writing; few; aspects of a good essay such as thesis, coherence, paragraphing, transitions, and vocabulary choice are mentioned. There is nothing on the history and nature of the English language.

Recommendations: The present document is excessively focused on "learning processes" and performance skills. It completely downplays content or knowledge. It needs to be re-oriented and geared as much to academic achievement and the development of literary taste and knowledge as it now is to technical and practical reading and writing. The public schools must do more than prepare students for employers' specific needs or for the work force in general. Vocational education is useful for those secondary school students who want it, but the schools must also provide a broad and demanding liberal arts education for those secondary students who want and are capable of such an education. A revised and rewritten document needs to eliminate the anti-literary and anti-academic implications of the present document. It also needs literary and cultural specifics that make clear that students are to become responsible American citizens and to study American literature in depth and breadth so that they become knowledgeable about their own literary and civic culture.

	Minnesota	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	19	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	11	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	9	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	15	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	54	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	11	8
Final Sum*	43	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Minnesota

Date of draft examined: April 1997

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators**. Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** For the most part. The document clearly states that these standards are for the English language. However, nothing indicates that these standards are for English language arts classes. This should be clarified.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** For the most part. It expects "correct" mechanics and spelling in written work, but it says nothing about correctness in oral language.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** No. There is no mention of American literature or any American cultural specifics in the standards.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** For the most part. The introduction to the document indicates that it wants "students and adults" who can be "responsible citizens," and the high-school standards include two excellent standards on the use of public parliamentary procedures and public speaking. But there are no specifics anywhere in the standards or their elaborations to indicate the specific country in which they are to be responsible citizens and achieve these "high standards." This is an omission that should be addressed.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Yes. The primary grade standards for reading, viewing, and listening indicate that students are to "pronounce new words using phonic skills."

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** No. This expectation is not mentioned.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments**. Unclear. Assessments will apparently be done locally, and the way in which the state plans to ensure reliability across school districts is "through a periodic audit." This is because the districts may use the state sample "performance packages" as they are, modify them to fit "local needs," or develop their own. There are a number of such packages for each educational level being assessed, and each contains a "series of classroom assignments that, taken together, indicate whether a student has learned the skills and knowledge specified in a content standard" for that level.

However, there seem to be several problems inherent in Minnesota's approach. First, it is not clear how uniformly the standards will be applied. In the middle-grade standard for comprehending, interpreting, and evaluating information from nonfiction, a note indicates that teachers may provide assistance with "specialized vocabulary" and "background information when issues analyzed are outside of students' experience." How will the state know whether teachers are providing assistance with vocabulary and background, or how many teachers and how much assistance? Even more problematic is the meaning of the second qualification. Why is it a problem when students are analyzing issues outside of their experience? Students are ordinarily expected to analyze many different kinds of historical, scientific, or literary issues that they have studied in their readings. If the issue is not one the student has studied, then why is the teacher assessing it? If certain issues can be understood only if they have been experienced, and the students haven't experienced them, then why is their understanding of these issues being assessed?

Second, it is not clear why there is one standard devoted to "scientific reading" for which students are to "comprehend and evaluate reports of events or ideas in the context of scientific knowledge." This is not generally within the expertise of the English teacher. Suggested sample assignments for this standard ask students to "create a portfolio of original reviews of scientific articles" or "read and compare scientific articles on global warming from the mass media and from scientific publications." How is the English teacher to determine if students have appropriately identified "contradictions," "inconsistencies," "bias," and "point of view," among other things students are expected to determine on their own? Although one might wonder if this standard is really for the physics or chemistry teacher, it is not in the science area of learning and is grouped with other standards for English classes or classes in technical reading and writing. The standard also suggests that teachers "consider using reports of events and ideas from different times, diverse cultures, and geographic locations." Again, this suggestion doesn't seem as if it were intended for physics and chemistry teachers. Will fulfilling such a standard inadvertently recruit scientifically illiterate teachers in the cause of delegitimizing science?

Third, for high-school level nonfiction reading, a note to teachers indicates that students may "demonstrate competence in a variety of ways." How can citizens compare students across classrooms in even one school? On the other hand, while the product of technical reading is clear (students must "repair a car," or "adjust and maintain service

equipment based on information in the manual," or "create business products" after reading computer software directions), these products cannot be compared across schools or counties.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. They are presented for the primary grades (K-3), intermediate (4-5), middle (6-8), and high school (9-12).

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** For the most part. They are organized in categories labeled "read, view and listen to complex information in the English language;" "write and speak effectively in the English language;" and "conduct research and communicate findings." The problems with these categories are many, however. Literary study is combined with reading and seems to get short shrift in this combination. More problematic is that fact that by combining reading, viewing, and listening together, the document has to make clear that assessments must be done in each mode and that teachers do not have options about language mode. Through grade 8, the standards make clear that listening, viewing, and reading tasks are required. Mysteriously, for 9-12, there is no indication that tasks are required in all three areas. A note to teachers with respect to 9-12 nonfiction reading indicates that students "may demonstrate competence in a variety of ways."

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** Yes. At each educational level, subobjectives are clearly delineated from the main objective indicating what students should do to demonstrate achievement of the standard.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** For the most part. These areas are not clearly or well addressed in the primary grades. From the intermediate grades on, the standards address behavior in discussion groups, use of varied roles and tasks, public speaking, and the use of parliamentary rules. There is no mention of the use of variously generated criteria for group discussion; its use is suggested for formal debate.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** To some extent. The standards distinguish reading nonfiction and fiction from technical reading. The attention to technical reading is a strength of these standards. Some reading skills are progressively developed over the grades, but many reading skills and strategies (such as summarizing and drawing conclusions), modes of organization, and vocabulary development through the grades are not addressed well from level to level. Indeed, the intermediate-grade standards specifies that students are to "summarize ideas and information from visual presentations," not from reading materials. And it is not clear how much of what is indicated in the standards for reading, viewing, and listening must be done through reading. After grade 8, nothing indicates that the subobjectives must be addressed as reading activities.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and cultural significance.** No. Literary study is given very little attention in these standards. It is addressed in the primary grades, almost not at all in the intermediate grades (only figurative language is mentioned), minimally addressed in the middle grades, and not at all in the high school grades. Literary elements, genres, and techniques are barely mentioned. There is no mention of various interpretive lenses, and absolutely no literary specifics of any kind. The area of learning within which it is submerged is entitled "read, view and listen to complex information in the English language," which suggests why literary study may be ignored in Minnesota. One does not typically read fiction and poetry for "complex information."

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** To some extent. One strong feature in this document is the attention paid to technical writing of various kinds. The standards are expected to be demonstrated in a number of different kinds of writing assignments, many of which are very practical in nature, and writing processes are mentioned. However, few aspects of a good essay are mentioned (e.g., thesis, coherence, paragraphing, transitions, vocabulary choice, and other details), and there is no mention of having students use variously developed criteria. One assumption underlying the performance packages may be that by expecting teachers to give their own students these writing tasks, the state can also expect teachers to have taught all the features of good writing that one expects them to teach. But

much depends on the local evaluation system in place. Moreover, the features of academic writing throughout the grades are so skimpily described, in contrast to the details offered for technical writing, and are so much less demanding overall than the details required at comparable educational levels for reading, viewing, and listening, that it is not at all clear how well students will be expected to develop as writers in Minnesota. The thrust of the writing strand is clearly towards practical and technical writing.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** No. The conventions are barely mentioned. See A.3 above.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. These areas are not mentioned at all.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases**. Yes. These areas are all addressed in the research strand.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** For the most part. However, some of the subobjectives are not clear in meaning; they seem to be written in a code. For example, the high-school standard for reading complex information wants students to "identify relevant background information" after asking them to "identify bias, point of view and author's intent." No examples are given to clarify what kind of "background information" is relevant in getting at an author's point of view, but in the next standard on interpreting perspectives, it is explained as "cultural, historical, and environmental." We then learn in a subobjective for this second standard that the reasons for an "identified point of view" are race, class, or gender. Is the meaning of the subobjective for the first standard, then, that an author's point of view is to be understood solely as a reflection of the author's race, class, and gender? If so, this should be made clear. As another example, the middle-grade standard on fictional reading wants students to evaluate fiction according to "pre-established criteria." What are such criteria? Who has developed them? No other standards document in the country has mentioned the existence of pre-established criteria for fiction.

2. **They are specific**. For the most part. However, there are some whose meaning is not clear or that are too general (e.g., "categorize events, behavior or character" in a selection or "explain the implication of the information" from reading some nonfiction selections).

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** Yes. The standards all use verbs like "comprehend," "analyze," "evaluate," "compare," etc. But for grades 9-12, it is not clear how one can assess the results of viewing, reading, and listening when students can demonstrate competence in a variety of ways. Moreover, there is no plan to assess the results statewide.

4. **They are comprehensive.** To some extent. See the gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**
a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** To a limited extent only. See the comments in section C.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** To some extent. The primary grade standard indicates that reading tasks must be grade-level. But there is no requirement for grade-level reading in grades 4-8. On the other hand, in 9-12, a note for the standard says that selections "should represent the level of difficulty found in professional publications, reports of international and national affairs, or reports of business trends."

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples**. No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** To some extent. For each standard, there is an example or two of what students may be asked to do, but they are very general and brief indications of the type of assignment.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** To some extent. Only in technical reading and writing can there be a common core of high expectations. There are too few explicit intellectual demands in upper-grade academic writing, and there are no literary specifics at all to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for Minnesota students. The document is not oriented to knowledge or content; its concerns are with "learning processes" and performance skills.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature**. Yes. This is implied by the high-school standard, described more fully below in E.4 and E.5, that students should read selections "representing various cultural ... perspectives," and by the note added to the description of the standard urging selections that "represent diverse points of view." The assumptions buried here are that a selection "represents" a cultural perspective, that a cultural perspective consists of a monolithic point of view on various matters, and that a selection from another culture will necessarily have a different point of view.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences**. No. This is not stated directly in the standards.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** Yes. This is conveyed by examples and notes to teachers. For one standard in the high school, global warming is suggested as one example. For another high-school standard, students may be asked to "survey information about an issue affecting youth." For a third high-school standard, teachers are asked to "consider non-fiction selections on history, social studies or political topics." A note to the teacher for a middle-grade standard talks about the need to supply background information if students address issues outside their experience (see A.9 for further details).

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** To some extent. This may be implied by the notion in one high-school standard, which is discussed below in E.5, that race, class, and gender account for a point of view on a matter. This particular standard ("Read, View, Listen 3.2) is mysterious in its intentions, as it wants students to "propose logical reasons" why an author has omitted information in a selection. (One wonders what might be a logical reason as opposed to an illogical one.) How can any reader know why an author has omitted relevant information? One normally wants students to analyze an author's logic and to try to detect where relevant information may be missing.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior**. To some extent. For example, at the high school level, in order to "interpret fiction and/or non-fiction selections from a variety of perspectives," students are expected to "analyze how meaning is affected by the purpose of the information and the intended audience" by investigating reasons for "identified points of views" and "alternate viewpoints." The examples given for types of reasons students might use are "race, class, and gender." These examples push student thinking in a limited and socially irresponsible direction, as such examples imply that personal experience, logic, consideration of the quality of the evidence (or lack of familiarity with the evidence), or any number of other possibilities are less important (if important at all) than people's skin color or sexual organs in accounting for the quality of their thinking and the point of view they arrive at. Such suggested examples also carry the great danger of encouraging and preserving stereotypes about people, something that is apparently already happening in Minnesota's classrooms. A note for a high-school standard on interpersonal communication, which expects students to "understand how various factors (e.g., gender, point of view) affect patterns of communication," urges teachers to warn students "to avoid the application of stereotypes in explaining differences in communication styles and patterns." And this is right after it has suggested gender as a factor here. One reaps what one sows.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** To some extent. A standard for the primary grades for reading, viewing, and listening wants students to "demonstrate appropriate techniques for learning new vocabulary" and gives as examples "contextual clues, vocabulary journals, and use of dictionary skills." These are repeated at the intermediate grades. The key word here is "appropriate;" it seems that systematic word study is not encouraged in Minnesota.

Mississippi

Summary

Strengths: Objectives in the area of speaking and listening are quite good—a real strength of this document. Unlike most documents, this one gives examples of specific literary works over the grades with suggested teaching strategies to indicate the desired reading level as well as the nature of cultural literacy expected. It clearly expects students to use standard English for speaking and writing.

Limitations: The organizational framework is confusing; disparate items are often mixed together in random order under a particular competency, and objectives relating to one area are often scattered under various competencies. Standards for literary study and composition are weak. No literary and cultural specifics are incorporated into the standards. Development of a reading and writing vocabulary is inadequately addressed. The standards overall are not as clear, specific, and measurable as they should be for high academic expectations.

Recommendations: To begin with, the document needs to note that one goal of the English language arts and reading is to help students acquire the literacy skills needed for active and thoughtful participation in American civic life. Above all, it needs a more coherent organizational framework and more academically oriented standards that are specific and measurable. Increases in intellectual complexity need to be shown better. Details need to be spelled out for systematic word study at all grade levels and for more demanding expectations in writing. In addition, the document needs to spell out some cultural and literary specifics in its standards, such as some key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions, to make clear its academic expectations for students' knowledge of the nature and history of their own country's literary and civic culture. The excellent list of writers born in Mississippi, now in an appendix, should be incorporated into the standards.

	Mississippi	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	20	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	6	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	17	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	16	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	59	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	8	8
Final Sum*	51	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Mississippi

Date of draft examined: 1996

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** For the most part. The prose is clear, but its organization is confusing. It is not easy to track the development of specific areas and skills from grade to grade. See more on this in section B.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Yes. The document does not indicate that other languages may be used in the English language-arts class, although an introductory philosophy statement declares that "students' linguistic diversity contributes to a rich community of voices and perspectives." I am assuming that this "linguistic diversity" in the English language-arts class refers to dialect differences.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing**. Yes. Its K-12 goals state the expectation that students will "show increasing competence in understanding and using standard English." This expectation appears in its competencies for all grade levels.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays**. To some extent. A suggested teaching strategy for grade 11 mentions "American Colonial" or "Puritan" writers. Although the competencies mention the study of the history of the English language and its literature, nowhere do they or the objectives specify the study of "American literature."

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens**. No. There is nothing in the introductory philosophy statement or in the goals of the document to suggest this expectation. Use of the language arts is mentioned only for personal goals and the workplace.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** For the most part. One suggested objective in grade 1 expects students to "apply beginning knowledge of phonics and other word attack skills in reading a variety of literature." It is also suggested that students recognize the phonetic principle that letters are associated with sounds heard in words. But it is not clear whether phonics instruction will be systematic.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** To some extent. This is not stated directly, but teachers are expected to "provide students time for independent reading of self-selected materials."

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments**. Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. The document provides grade-by-grade competencies keyed to seven broad curricular goals. Under each competency are a number of objectives. The competencies are required to be taught; the objectives are suggested, not mandated.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** To some extent. The competencies reflect the development of skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing, but these skills are combined in different ways as part of 10 to 14 competencies per grade. The competencies themselves change a bit from K-3, 4-8, and 9-12. They are all keyed to the seven broad goals; two goals deal with reading and literary study, two deal chiefly with group interaction and communication with others; two deal with obtaining and using information for various purposes; and a seventh deals with language conventions. This organizational scheme does not lead to conceptual clarity; disparate items are often mixed together in random order under a particular competency, such as reading and literary objectives, and objectives relating to one area are often scattered under various competencies. For example, in grade 10, an objective for students to "edit oral and written presentations to reflect correct grammar, usage, and mechanics" appears under Competency 5: "Complete oral and written presentations which exhibit interaction and consensus within a group." Related objectives appear under Competency 9: "Sustain progress toward fluent control of grammar, mechanics, and usage of standard English in the context of writing and speaking."

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** To some extent. The objectives under each competency are often a mixed bag with respect to their levels as well as their content. For example, in grade three under "experience a variety of literary forms and styles in order to discover the meaning and beauty of language," students are to recognize "characteristics of quality literature," "identify significant information in text," "use prefixes and suffixes to modify the meaning of root words," "express language that has been read through performance of the arts," and use a dictionary to find or confirm the meaning of a word." These objectives span both higher- and lower-level understandings.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established and peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** Yes. Overall, these are all addressed. The use of various discussion roles, rules, and strategies is handled quite well in the suggested objectives over the grades. Objectives in this area constitute a major strength of this document.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** For the most part. The progressive development of various reading skills is covered through the grades. But even though there is a competency for vocabulary and spelling from grades 4-8, it does not include systematic methods for developing vocabulary, and from grade 9 on, no competency addresses word study—the years when it is perhaps most fruitful. All that does appear for these grades, under the competency "Discover the history and inherent beauty of cultural expression in language and literature," is an objective that asks students to recognize "root words, prefixes, suffixes, and vocabulary adopted from other languages into English," an objective that appears in this form for more than just the four high-school grades.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance.** To some extent. Although few clear details are offered in grades 9-12, the competencies and objectives seem to address a variety of literary elements, genres, and responses. But they do not address various schools of literary criticism, and they contain no literary or cultural specifics. In competencies for K-3, "students read and listen to works of literature representing various cultures and historical periods." In 4-8, they "discover the history and inherent beauty of cultural expression in language and literature." And in 9-12, they "explore cultural contributions to the history of the English language and its literature." Students are also to read and listen to "selections from various literary genres." But no literary specifics appear in any of the objectives. One objective suggests they read both "classic and contemporary" works, but these terms are not defined. On the other hand, suggested teaching strategies are frequently offered after the objectives listed for a particular competency, and these often deal with specific literary works. This feature also helps suggest an expected reading level for this grade.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established and peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** To some extent. These areas are not covered as well as they could be, and objectives addressing them are scattered under several competencies. Writing processes are specified throughout, but the use of prescribed evaluation criteria is not specifically addressed in an objective for grades 4-8, and the objective for grade 9 on that students "share, critique, and evaluate works in progress and completed works through a process approach" leaves unanswered whether they are expected to use prescribed rubrics beyond grade 3. The expectations for good writing also leave much to be desired. There is no mention of the term "coherence" or "thesis" or "controlling idea" through grade 12, nor any specific expectation by grade 12 that students are to write well-organized compositions, with ideas in well-formed paragraphs logically related to a thesis or controlling idea.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** Yes. Different specifics are mentioned over the grades.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** To some extent. One of its 9-12 competencies expects students to "explore cultural contributions to the history of the English language and its literature." And it is suggested frequently that students explore the origins of words. However, despite the attention that is paid to the use of dialect and its consequences, there is no specific suggestion for students to learn how oral dialects develop, the distinction between formal and informal uses of oral and written English, or the variability of its oral forms and the stability of the written form.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** For the most part. These seem to be addressed adequately in various competencies, but there is nothing on the development of useful research questions over the grades.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** For the most part. Most competencies are clear, with few exceptions (e.g., "construct meaning by applying personal experiences and by reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing"). Although most objectives are easily understandable, some are not (e.g., "interpret oral, visual, and written language in order to think critically and to solve problems" and "integrate speaking, listening, writing, and reading to interpret personal ideas/opinions and those of others").

2. **They are specific**. To some extent. Many objectives are too broad for a clear understanding of their scope (e.g., "read an increasingly wider variety of literature to investigate issues common to all people...," "recognize the interrelatedness of language, literature, and culture," or "use appropriate vocabulary for specific situations, purposes, and audiences").

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools)**. To some extent. The reading objectives tend to be measurable. But some objectives are unmeasurable because what they ask for is impossible to determine (e.g., "recognize the reason for an author's choice of words in a passage"). Others are unmeasurable because they are simply statements of dogma (e.g., "recognize that language differs according to dialect and social settings"). Others are unmeasurable because they require interpretation and judgment of individual intentions (e.g., "express the language of what they have read through performance of the arts"). Others are not measurable in an assessment (e.g., "identify and locate information from community resources through inquiries, interviews, research, etc. to form ideas and opinions" or "identify and locate information to solve real-life problems"). Others are not measurable because they require knowledge of individual experience (e.g., "use prior knowledge to identify commonalities between personal experiences and story elements" or "relate personal, contemporary, or cultural experiences to the texts").

4. **They are comprehensive**. To some extent. See the gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** To some extent. There are some increases in intellectual difficulty in each area over the grades, but they often take place over a number of grade levels, not grade by grade, and are not always particularly striking or important. Throughout the grades, the verbs used frequently in many objectives and competencies, such as "read," "explore," "share," "discover," "recognize," "respond," and "sustain progress," do not clearly indicate the quality of what is expected. At no point, for example, do writing objectives (even by grade 12) clearly suggest the expectation of a well-organized and coherent composition, with a clear controlling idea or thesis. For writing, there is not much discernible difference in the suggested demands from the middle grades through grade 10. For vocabulary development, there are no clear differences in intellectual demands for most of the grades.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** Yes. Reading levels are not specified, but titles of specific works are regularly mentioned in suggested teaching strategies interspersed throughout the listing of objectives and competencies for each grade level. For example, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Animal Farm*, *The Free Man*, and *Great Expectations* are mentioned for grade 9, *The Scarlet Letter* and *Our Town* for grade 10, *Walden* and Faulkner's "Barn Burning" for grade 11, *Oedipus Rex*, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, *Macbeth*, Septima Clark's *Ready from Within*, and "Kubla Khan" for grade 12.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples**. No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** Yes.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** To some extent. Many competencies and objectives are not expressed in a sufficiently specific and demanding way to suggest that they can lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in Mississippi. Although there are literary specifics in the suggested teaching strategies, there are no specifics in the competencies themselves. The examples suggest much higher expectations than the competencies and objectives themselves. A rewording and sharpening of the language in them would do much to upgrade the academic expectations lurking in this document. In addition, the incorporation of some literary specifics could accomplish wonders in leading to a common core. One of the appendices lists Mississippi writers—all nationally known black and white writers born in Mississippi, whether or not all their writing was about the state (e.g., Richard Wright and Tennessee Williams). It is a pity that those writing this document weren't bold enough to create one literature standard requiring study of important Mississippi writers from K-12. This is something that every standards document should do: require study of important writers from its own state or region as part of its K-12 literature programs. Not only is it a way to teach about our different social communities in a way that is consistent with the notion of state-developed standards, it also provides literary study of our social diversity within a civic framework.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular cul-**

ture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature. No. This implication does not come through in the competencies or objectives.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** Yes. For example, one objective wants sixth graders to "use prior knowledge to identify commonalities between personal experiences and story elements." In grade 10, another wants students to "read, discuss, and interpret literature to make connections to life." In grade 12, another wants students to "relate personal, contemporary, and cultural experiences to the texts." From grades 4-8, under the goal of using "language for continuous learning," students are to "construct meaning by applying personal experiences and by reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing." The exact meaning or intention of this competency is not made very clear by an objective listed under it ("integrate speaking, listening, writing, and reading to interpret personal ideas/opinions and those of others"), but it is clearly a bow to a constructivist approach to language development.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues**. For the most part. For grades 4-8, under the competency that students are to "discover the history and inherent beauty of cultural expression in language and literature," the first objective wants students to "read an increasingly wider variety of literature to investigate issues common to all people including multicultural experiences through literature, language, and culture." In grade 11, one objective suggests that students "read to associate literary experiences with contemporary issues, such as those dealing with religion, politics, government, economics, etc."

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** No.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma**. Generally no. There are just a few examples among the many objectives in this document (see D.3 for an example).

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** To some extent. The document makes clear its belief that facts can be distinguished from opinions and that authors have purposes which readers can discern. Further, there is no implication that all texts are susceptible to multiple valid interpretations. Nevertheless, it often mentions using personal experiences to "construct meaning" and fails to specify student use of prescribed criteria for evaluating writing.

Missouri

Summary

Strengths: The document makes very clear its expectation that one goal of the English language-arts and reading curriculum is to prepare students for informed participation in American civic life. Speaking and listening skills are extremely well-addressed to support this goal. The document has strong standards on group interaction, decision making, and the use of democratic principles.

Limitations: Too many standards are not specific or measurable, nor do they show increasing complexity over the grades. Standards in reading, especially with respect to the development of a reading vocabulary, are not strong. Nor are writing standards. Literary study is inadequately addressed, and there are no literary and cultural specifics at all, not even a requirement that students study American literature. The history and nature of the English language is also not addressed. The document excessively favors a process approach to reading and writing, as well as a problem- solving approach to the organization of academic study in the English language arts.

Recommendations: To begin with, a more coherent organizational scheme is needed, to cut down on repetition and scatter, and to improve coverage of areas that are inadequately covered now, such as literature. Above all, it needs to increase the specificity and measurability of its standards, to articulate better the increases in complexity over the grades, to incorporate some literary and cultural specifics into the standards at all educational levels to indicate expected level of reading, and to eliminate the anti-literary and anti-academic thrust of some of the present standards. A reorganization of the standards to reflect the disciplinary bases for the English language arts and reading, together with an upgrading of academic expectations for reading, writing, and literary study, would help reduce the emphasis on problem-solving and group interaction that now overwhelms the rest of the English language-arts and reading curriculum. The document also needs to make clear that students are to receive systematic phonics instruction and that English is the language of the English language-arts class. To support the latter point, the standards for "Communication Arts" might be retitled the "English Communication Arts" or the "Communication Arts for English."

	Missouri	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	23	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	6	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	11	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	10	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	50	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	12	8
Final Sum*	38	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Missouri

Date of draft examined: 1996

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** Generally yes. There are a few cryptic objectives in the document; e.g., by grade 4, students are to "identify a new or unfamiliar viewpoint in a text." And there is a touch of political correctness in the introduction (e.g., "listening skills" are apparently among those skills that have been "traditionally underrepresented") and in a section at the end of the document called Issues and Practices in the Teaching of the Communication Arts (e.g., a certain version of written English has supposedly been "privileged").

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** To some extent only. In Issues and Practices, teachers are to respect children's "home languages" by "choosing reading materials and writing assignments that allow them to access their prior knowledge." It is not clear how students' prior knowledge can be accessed in, say, Urdu unless they are given materials in Urdu. And if they are, how can the typical English language-arts teacher handle this situation?

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing**. Yes. Proficiency in standard English conventions is expected in speaking and writing, as explained in content overview material and in the standards themselves.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays**. Yes. American literature is mentioned in the introductory material. It is not, however, mentioned in the standards.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens**. Yes. In Goal 4 in the introductory material, students are to "understand and apply the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in Missouri and the United States."

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials**. Unclear. It expects decoding skills to be taught, but in Issues and Practices, the writers state that phonics instruction should be "integrated into meaningful reading and writing activities." This statement leaves unclear whether students will be expected to apply phonics skills to selections consisting chiefly of decodable words so that they learn how to identify words in context without having to be dependent on context clues.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality**. No. This is not stated explicitly, although the document writers clearly want students to do so.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments**. Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels**. Yes. The standards are presented for K-4, 5-8, and 9-12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** To some extent. The document does not have a conceptually coherent organizational scheme. The standards are organized around categories called "Gather, Analyze, and Apply Information and Ideas," "Communicate Effectively Within and Beyond the Classroom," "Recognize and Solve Problems," and "Make Decisions and Act as Responsible Members of Society." The first one focuses on reading and listening, the second on writing and speaking, the third on problem-solving, and the fourth on group work and decision making. The last two categories do not reflect areas of research or scholarship in the language arts, and thus lack coherent academic content for the English language-arts class. Various language skills get attention in the last two categories as well as in the first two, and as a result there is a great deal of scatter for the components for each language area as well as a certain amount of redundancy over the categories, especially for rhetorical elements and writing processes (e.g., choosing formats appropriate for audience and purpose appear in the second and third categories).

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** To some extent. The objectives listed for a particular standard are often a mixture of higher-level and lower-level items (e.g., "analyze and evaluate print and nonprint advertising" is in a list with "evaluate the effectiveness of an author's or speaker's choice of genre," or "respond to communications in a variety of ways" is in the same list with "distinguish between main and supporting ideas").

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** Yes. These areas are covered with great strength in this document because of its focus on recognizing and solving problems, and on group work and decision

making. Students are expected to learn a great deal about group interaction and the use of democratic principles. They are also expected to use established criteria to evaluate "communications and presentations" as well as generate their own.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** To some extent. Most reading skills are developed over the grades, and various textual features and strategies are mentioned. But the increases in intellectual complexity are not always very demanding or clear (e.g., the skills from 5-12 for "locate and gather information and ideas" or for "process, organize, and evaluate information and ideas"). Further, the development of a reading vocabulary is given inadequate or misfocused attention. In K-4, students are to "identify words and phrases that reflect the cultures or eras in which they are used." This does not lead to an advanced reading vocabulary in English. From 5-12, students are simply to "predict meanings of new words and concepts from context." This implies that systematic word study is to be excluded from the curriculum. At the least, use of a dictionary could have been mentioned.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and cultural significance.** To some extent. The standards address the use of a variety of genres, literary elements, and techniques. But there are no literary specifics at all in these standards, and the specifics of literary study (literary elements, techniques, and the use of various interpretive lenses) are very much "underrepresented" in this document, especially in contrast to the detail for other elements of "communication."

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** To some extent. Many aspects of writing are covered. For example, students in 9-12 are expected to "formulate and support a thesis or hypothesis." They are also expected to use established criteria as well as formulate their own. However, the standards do not present the development of writing skills over the grades very clearly or completely; there is no mention of coherence, paragraph development, topic sentences, transitions, or the development and application of logical thinking in 5-12.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** To some extent. These are covered over the grades but with few details suggested.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. There is nothing on these items.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** For the most part. These areas are covered in the first and fourth category, although not systematically because the relevant elements appear in two different strands. The various sources of information are not suggested, however, nor is the development of research questions.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** For the most part. However, some are obscure in meaning (e.g., 5-8 students are to "develop views based on new readings and experiences"). And the word "communication" is vastly overused. Simpler prose could have been used to facilitate readability.

2. **They are specific.** To some extent only. Many are too general (e.g., "compare and contrast communications in their writing and speaking," "use techniques observed in effective communications as models for speaking and writing," and "respond formally and informally to a variety of themes and genres").

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** To some extent only. Many are too general (e.g., "compare and contrast a variety of genres and texts" and "read, view, listen to and respond to literature, film and other texts from diverse cultures and eras"). Some are obscure in meaning (e.g., see D.1 above). Some are process standards (e.g., "generate a list of key words and sources for a research topic"). Some are simply unmeasurable (e.g., "interpret and respond to texts through performances in the fine arts and other content areas," "analyze the impact of decisions," "access community

resources," "demonstrate use of a growing vocabulary," "compare their own decision-making processes with those of literary and historical figures," or "evaluate texts considering prior experiences and previous readings and observations"). Some are baffling for the intended grade levels. For example, in the middle grades, students are to "explore how the English language changes as a result of historical events and cultural connections." It is difficult to think of any recent historical event that has fundamentally changed the English language. The greatest influences on the language occurred centuries ago, after the Norman invasion of England and the later incorporation of learned words based on Greek and Latin. How this objective is to be approached by middle-grade students is unclear. The example that is given is obscure in meaning, as it suggests that students collect "information and artifacts" to show how a particular culture has influenced the English language." The document writers should have offered a concrete example or two of what they had in mind.

4. **They are comprehensive**. To some extent. But see the gaps noted above in section C. If the document had used a more coherent and relevant organizational scheme for the English language arts, many of the gaps would have been detected.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** To some extent. Some areas do not seem to show much of an increase in intellectual difficulty from 5-12 (e.g., see C.2). In part, this may be because the elements in any one language area are scattered over several strands. It is also not clear what level of difficulty is expected at the high-school level for reading and literary study because no specifics are offered; the demands would be clear, for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples.** To some extent. Some examples of student writing are provided in an appendix, although they do not all come from Missouri students.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark**. To some extent. Sample learning activities are suggested for each general standard, but many do not clarify the objectives for that standard very well. They simply repeat the objective itself (e.g., the activity for formulating and supporting a thesis, or for organizing and presenting information using appropriate available technologies).

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** To some extent only. Missouri's standards are not as comprehensive, demanding, and measurable at the higher grades as they should be, and without expected reading levels or literary specifics to suggest reading level, it is not clear how its standards can lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all Missouri students.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** Yes. From the middle grades on, students are to "analyze communications to determine how they reflect particular cultures or eras," and one example offered suggests that students "read a literary work written in a different culture and era" and then explain what they learned "about that culture and time period by reading the work," and then "compare that culture and era to American culture today." This is little more than an exercise in stereotype formation, which will probably be assisted by the teacher, as it takes serious students many years of extensive reading about a particular culture to understand how any individual work might reflect it.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** Yes. Missouri is rather heavy-handed about this. Beginning in the primary grades, students are to "relate literature and other texts to prior experiences." In addition, in the middle grades, they are to "contrast fictional accounts with real-life experiences" and "make comparisons and draw conclusions about texts based on experiences in daily life." Sample learning activities hammer the point home: students are to "collect favorite poems around a theme," and relate each poem to their life. Or they are to "write or tell about a real experience" that reminds them of events in a novel." Missouri students are apparently to be completely limited by their own necessarily limited experiences in understanding imaginative literature as well as the real world around them.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** No. This is not directly stated.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** To some extent. For liter-

ary study, the material in Issues and Practices suggests that students should be taught to "value a multiplicity of meanings" without also suggesting that the value of a meaning might depend on the extent to which support for it is logical, accurate, and adequate in relation to all the available evidence.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma**. No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** For the most part. It excessively "privileges" a process approach to reading and writing, as well as a communication/problem solving approach to the organization of academic study in the English language arts. This is too limited an approach to curriculum development, especially for literary study and for teaching composition.

New Hampshire

Summary

Strengths: It is written clearly for the general public, and it expects students to use standard English in speaking and writing. It is one of the few documents to explicitly expect students to study classical and contemporary American and British literature, as well as literary works translated into English. It also incorporates into its objectives such literary specifics as Pulitzer and Nobel prize winners, writing by local and regional authors, as well as books receiving Newbery and Caldecott awards.

Limitations: It contains one strand entitled "English language uses" that is a mixed bag of all sorts of objectives, many of which belong in other strands. Too many objectives lack specificity and measurability. The development of a reading vocabulary, or systematic word study, is given no attention at all through the grades.

Recommendations: It needs to clarify that students will receive systematic instruction in phonics. Above all, it needs to revise the organizational scheme for the standards, sort out its standards better, and develop more specific and measurable standards. Details need to be spelled out for systematic word study at all grade levels, and students should be expected to study the history and nature of the English language. In addition, the document needs to spell out some key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions in its standards to make clear its academic expectations for students' knowledge of the nature and history of their own country's literary and civic culture.

	New Hampshire	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	29	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	7	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	18	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	11	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	65	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	10	8
Final Sum*	55	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

New Hampshire

Date of draft examined: June 1995

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Yes. There is nothing to indicate otherwise.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** Yes. To "communicate effectively" when speaking or writing, students are to "understand and employ the conventions of English grammar."

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** Yes. It is mentioned more than once, and in a general standard as well as a specific one.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** For the most part. Although the phrase is not explicitly used, one of the document's goals is for students to use language skills to succeed in "civic" settings.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Unclear. All word-reading strategies are combined in one sentence.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** Yes. Students are to "read independently" or "intensively" during "free time" for "personal and academic purposes," although it does not suggest quantity.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes, for K-3, 4-6, and 7-10.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** For the most part. The organizing strands are reading; writing; speaking, listening, and viewing; literature; and English language uses. This latter category is a potpourri of all kinds of items. One of its three components deals with gathering and organizing information; the other two are eclectic in nature. They contain many items that belong in other categories and make for a confusing document.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** No. General and specific items are randomly mixed together in each strand.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** For the most part. No mention of evaluating group talk or using criteria to evaluate individual talk. The objectives in these areas are not clearly and coherently developed through the grades.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** For the most part. Objectives for reading appear in two different strands. Almost all the right elements eventually get mentioned at some point, but they are not clearly and coherently developed from the primary grades on. The development of a reading vocabulary, or systematic word study, is not given any attention at all through the grades.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance.** For the most part. A standard expects "competence in understanding ... classical and contemporary American and British literature as well as literary works translated into English." Objectives mention "Newbery books," "Caldecott books," "worthy examples of writing by local and regional authors," and works by "Pulitzer and Nobel prize winners." However, the use of different critical lenses are not mentioned, and no specific works, authors, or literary traditions are pointed out.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** For

the most part. Writing processes and various rhetorical modes, genres, and strategies are addressed. But many objectives focus on narrative writing in the writing strand, although they are supplemented by others with a non-narrative orientation in the "English Language Uses" strand. There is no mention of using variously generated criteria for writing.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** For the most part. A few details are given for conventions at different levels.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. The history and nature of the English language are not mentioned, or the distinction between oral and written language.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** For the most part. Almost all these features are covered, although relevant objectives are in several strands. The document does not spell out the variety of sources for locating information or the development of useful research questions or forming hypotheses.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear**. Yes.

2. **They are specific.** To some extent. Many are too general (e.g., "Use and understand spoken language appropriate to the topic, purpose, and/or audience," "Write effectively for public audiences," "Initiate writing for a variety of purposes and audiences," and "Appreciate and respond to written, spoken, and audio-visual texts").

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** To some extent. Many objectives are of the "recognize that" or "understand that" variety and are unmeasurable. Many writing objectives are process objectives and unmeasurable. Many objectives are so general in nature that they are unmeasurable as stated.

4. **They are comprehensive.** For the most part. Gaps are indicated above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** To some extent. Most areas from the primary grades to grade 10 show increasing expectations over the grades and include most of the important features. But they are not organized in a clear way, many features in each strand are not progressively developed (e.g., there is nothing on vocabulary), and the differences in intellectual demand between grade 6 and grade 10 are not always clear. Moreover, the reading and literature objectives contain no literary specifics to indicate level of difficulty. Intellectual demands would be clear, in the high-school years for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples**. No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** No.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** To some extent. Without more specific and measurable objectives, as well as some literary specifics, indexed to reading levels, it is not clear how there can be a common core of academic expectations.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** No.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** Yes. Students are to "relate the literary texts they read, hear, or view to their prior knowledge and experiences."

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues**. No.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** For the most part. Students

from grade 4 on are to "understand that a single text ... may elicit a variety of responses and informed, reasoned interpretations." No qualifications are suggested, such as the difference between a medicine bottle label and a poem, or features such as deliberate ambiguity that can stimulate alternate interpretations of a work.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** To some extent. For example, "explain that literature can be used to better understand themselves and others" and "understand that themes and events in literature often parallel real life."

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow**. To some extent. Too many writing objectives reflect the writing process approach only.

New Jersey

Summary

Strengths: Its speaking and listening standards address the development of debating skills and participation in structured debates and discussions.

Limitations: The document has many limitations. It is dominated by constructivist and process jargon. Its standards for reading, literary study, and writing are weak. Expectations for the use of research processes and skills are inadequate. Many standards lack specificity and measurability, and they do not show much increase in complexity over educational levels. There are no literary specifics given as examples to indicate the level of reading difficulty expected. There is not even an explicit expectation that students will study American literature.

Recommendations: The document needs to be completely rewritten in clear prose, with a coherent organizational scheme, sorted objectives, and specific and measurable standards. It needs to indicate that English is the language to be used in the English language-arts classroom and that students are to use standard English in their written work. It also needs to make clear that one goal of the English language arts and reading is to prepare students for participation in the civic life of this particular country and that American literature is one body of literature they are to study. It should also clarify that students will receive systematic instruction in phonics. Details need to be spelled out for systematic word study at all grade levels, students should be expected to study the history and nature of the English language, and some literary specifics should be incorporated into its standards at all educational levels, such as key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions, to signal academic expectations for students' reading level as well as their knowledge of the nature and history of this country's literary and civic culture.

	New Jersey	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	4	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	5	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	5	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	7	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	21	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	18	8
Final Sum*	3	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

New Jersey

Date of draft examined: 1997

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** To some extent. The document is filled with academic and educational "constructivist" jargon (e.g., "language use is an active process of constructing meaning" or "the reading process requires readers to ... recognize and appreciate print as a cueing system for meaning").

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Unclear. There is nothing in the document to indicate otherwise, but the word "English" appears only once in the indicators, as noted in A.3, and even the title does not contain "English" in it.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** To some extent. Students are expected to "use the conventions of spoken English, such as grammar and appropriate forms of address" in the speaking strand. But there is no mention of the word "English" in the writing strand with respect to the use of language conventions. Indeed, the "cumulative progress indicator" indicates that students are to edit their writing for "developmentally appropriate" syntax, spelling, grammar, usage, and punctuation. The word "correct" or "standard" is not used. Moreover, other than in the speaking strand, the word "English" does not appear in the standards, descriptive statements, and "cumulative progress indicators." Nor does it appear in the very title of the document, which is "Language Arts Literacy."

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** No. There is no mention of American literature by name or of the country in which these standards are to function. If the document were not titled "New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards," the reader would have no clue as to where in the world these standards are to be met.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens**. No. The descriptive statements do not mention civic participation, citizenship, or even civic literacy as one of the goals of language arts programs.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** No. The descriptive statement for the reading strand contains "whole language" code words (e.g., "print as a cueing system for meaning") and combines "phonics, context clues, and foreshadowing" together when mentioning reading strategies.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** No.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments**. No. The introduction to the standards indicates that they are intended as a "catalyst for curriculum development and revision."

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. Standards are presented for K-4, 5-8, and 9-12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** To some extent. The five organizing strands are speaking, listening, writing, reading, and viewing, understanding, and using "nontextual" visual information. The first four are reasonable categories. But indicators for literary study are interspersed with those for informational reading, with no indication as to which kind of reading the indicator belongs. The last strand has no basis in English language-arts research or scholarship; nor is it consistent in its focus. Some of its K-8 indicators deal with the media. Some seem more appropriate for an art or film course. Those for 9-12 deal with debates, panel discussions, and interview skills, and are an exact repetition of those in the speaking strand for 9-12.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** No. Higher-order and mid-range concerns are mixed undiscriminately in each strand.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of discussion rules, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** To some extent. New Jersey expects students to learn debating skills as well as to give an extemporaneous speech and to require participation in structured debates and discussions. However, no indicators address the use of formal criteria for evaluating them or discussion roles for varied purposes.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** Only to

some extent. Reading skills are skimpily addressed and are not offered in a clear developmental progression. The development of a reading vocabulary is poorly addressed, primarily because whole language pedagogy expects students to develop a crippling dependence on "context clues" for identifying unfamiliar words and for acquiring a large reading vocabulary; in K-4, students are to "expand vocabulary using appropriate strategies and techniques, such as word analysis and context clues." Other ways to expand a reading vocabulary are not offered at higher levels. Nor are the civic purposes of literacy mentioned. Sometimes, objectives seem to contradict each other. For example, right after students are to "identify passages in the text that support their point of view," students are to "distinguish personal opinions and points of view from those of the author, and distinguish fact from opinion." An acknowledgment of the existence of authorial intention in this document seems at odds with the constructivist perspective dominating the document.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance.** To some extent. The progress indicators expect students to identify major literary elements and forms and understand various "theories of literary criticism." However, literary study is interspersed with reading skills in the reading strand and is inadequately addressed. No literary or cultural specifics are given; students in K-4 are expected only to "read independently a variety of literature written by authors of different cultures, ethnicities, genders, and ages." In the upper elementary grades and high school, students are expected to read for such cryptic purposes as "to identify common aspects of human existence" and "to understand the relationship between contemporary writing and past literary traditions." They are also expected to acquire the belief that "our literary heritage (unexplained) is marked by distinct literary movements and is part of a global literary tradition." It is not at all clear what that means. Nor is it clear why 9-12 students are to understand "rhetorical devices, logical fallacy, and jargon" as "appropriate literary concepts."

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** To some extent only. The thrust of the writing strand is anti-intellectual. The introduction to the strand states: "Writing activities should include opportunities for students to think about their ideas and feelings and the events and people in their lives." It implies that writing is primarily an expression of subjective experiences and perceptions and not an analytical tool or way of describing an outer or objective reality. This implication is carried out in the indicators, which encourage egocentricity if not solipsism; students are expected to write "from experiences, thoughts, and feelings," to "extend experience," to write "on self-selected topics," and "to establish and use criteria for self- and group evaluation of written products." There are other progress indicators in this strand, but in none of them are students expected to grapple with the ideas of others with respect to their logic or validity. There is no mention of analytical writing.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** No. The use of "conventions of spoken English, such as grammar and appropriate forms of address," is mentioned in K-4, as is the "developmentally appropriate" use of conventions in the writing strand. No further details are provided here or at higher grade levels. And it is not clear whether "appropriate forms of address" mean standard English. This area is very inadequate.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. There is nothing to address any of these topics.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** To some extent. In the reading strand, students "gather and synthesize data for research from a variety of sources." In the writing strand, in K-4, students "write to synthesize information from multiple sources," in 5-8 "cite sources of information," and in 9-12, "write a research paper that synthesizes and cites data." In the viewing strand, students "demonstrate the ability to gain information from a variety of media," "use simple charts, graphs, and diagrams to report data," and "take notes on visual information from films, presentations, observations, and other visual media." But there is nothing on the use of standard written sources of information (such as a dictionary), on the development of open-ended research questions, or on the need to seek and evaluate the quality of various sources of information.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** For the most part. A few are obscure in

meaning, such as "understand that our literary heritage ... is part of a global literary tradition."

2. **They are specific.** To some extent only. A large number of "progress indicators" are general, such as "understand the range of literary forms and content that elicit aesthetic response," "read with comprehension," and "read and use printed materials and technical manuals from other disciplines, such as science, social studies, mathematics, and applied technology." Others are so general that it is not clear what concrete interpretation is intended, such as "use oral communication to influence the behavior of others."

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** To some extent only. Many are process indicators, such as "use listening, speaking, writing, and viewing to assist with reading," "participate in collaborative speaking activities, such as choral reading," "conduct an informational interview," or "prepare for and participate in structured debates and panel discussions." Many are unmeasurable or not worth measuring, such as "write from experiences, thoughts, and feelings," "use writing to extend experience," "understand that written communication can affect the behavior of others," "read more than one work by a single author," "demonstrate interview skills in real-life situations, such as college admissions or employment," and "use oral communication to influence the behavior of others."

4. **They are comprehensive.** No. There are enormous gaps, as noted in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** To some extent only. There is little if any indication of increasing intellectual demand from one educational level to another in many areas. Nor are all important aspects of a particular area addressed from level to level when there seems to be an attempt to increase intellectual demand. For example, in K-4, students are to "identify elements of a story, such as characters, setting, and sequence of events," in 5-8, they are to "understand the concepts of figurative language, symbolism, allusion, connotation, and denotation," which is an advance. But in 9-12, they are only to "understand the effect of literary devices, such as alliteration and figurative language, on the reader's emotions and interpretation," which is pretty much what was in 5-8 and does not touch upon the kinds of literary techniques that might be found in complex materials, such as foreshadowing, irony, and flashback. And without any literary specifics in the standards, it is not clear what the intellectual demands of the reading and literature standards are; the demands would be clear by the high-school years, for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples.** No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** No.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** To some extent only. There are too many gaps in coverage, too little specificity in the indicators, not enough increase in intellectual complexity in most areas, no literary specifics, and no index of reading level and writing quality for these indicators to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for New Jersey students.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** To some extent. The indicator "understand the relationship between contemporary writing and past literary traditions" seems to imply that contemporary writing is monolithic in nature, that past literary traditions were monolithic in nature, and that there is one type of relationship between them.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** Yes, explicitly. Students are expected to "link aspects of the text with experiences and people in their own lives." According to New Jersey, the "reading process requires readers to relate prior knowledge and personal experiences to written texts."

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** Yes, implicitly.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** Yes. Although this is not stated directly, it is implied by a constructivist approach and by the way in which most reading and writing indicators are written. Nowhere are students expected to evaluate the validity and logic of what they read or what others write.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to**

manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior. No. No examples are offered.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** To some extent. For example, students are to "understand that our literary heritage is marked by distinct literary movements and is part of a global literary tradition."

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** Yes. Whole language pedagogy and constructivism dominate literary study and writing. Collaborative writing is another trendy pedagogical technique without research evidence to support it that is dictated in an indicator: Students are expected to "write collaboratively and independently. "

New York

Summary

Strengths: The document is written clearly for the general public. It expects students to speak and write in standard English. Its standards are clear, specific, measurable, and comprehensive in almost all areas.

Limitations: Its organizational scheme lacks coherence; literary analysis is separated from literary response, and listening is separated from speaking. Instead, reading is combined with listening, and speaking with writing, obliterating the distinctions between oral and written language. No standards address the development of a reading vocabulary or the nature and history of the English language. The standards do not embed literary or cultural specifics to indicate expected level of reading difficulty or expected literary knowledge; the present standards could be set in any English-speaking country in the world. There is no mention that students are to study even American literature. Many of the writing samples offered reflect political bias, while some of the standards have anti-literary and anti-academic implications.

Recommendations: To begin with, the document should indicate that one goal of the English language arts and reading is to prepare students for participation in the civic life of this particular country and that American literature is one body of literature they are to study. The document would be stronger and clearer with an organizational scheme based on coherent bodies of research or scholarship. The development of a reading vocabulary needs to be addressed. Above all, the standards need to embed such literary and cultural specifics as key authors, works, literary traditions, and literary periods to make clear its academic expectations for students' reading level at different educational levels as well as their knowledge of the nature and history of this country's literary and civic culture.

	New York	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	24	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	9	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	18	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	24	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	75	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	15	8
Final Sum*	60	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

New York

Date of draft examined: March 1996

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Yes. There is nothing to indicate otherwise.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** Yes. It says so explicitly in its standards.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** No. There is no mention of American literature in its standards document.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens**. No. It does not suggest as a goal the use of literacy skills for informed participation in the civic life of this particular democracy.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Yes. The standards state that elementary students are to "make appropriate and effective use of strategies to construct meaning from print, such as prior knowledge about a subject, structural and context clues, and an understanding of letter-sound relationships to decode difficult words."

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality**. Yes. An accompanying resource guide says students should "read a minimum of 25 books or the equivalent per year across all content areas." However, the description of everything that can count tends to vitiate the significance of this expectation: "The reading will include long and short works from classic and contemporary literature, adolescent fiction, nonfiction books and articles, nontraditional genres such as diaries and journals, little-known works, students' own writing, and electronically-produced texts." What the right hand giveth, the left hand taketh away.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes, at three levels: elementary, intermediate, and commencement.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** To some extent. The performance standards are organized under four general language function/ language process-oriented standards; three of the four include use of all language processes in them. One "content" standard addresses social interaction, another, information and understanding, a third, literary response, and a fourth critical analysis and evaluation. As a result, analysis and evaluation of literature are separated from response to literature, an artificial dichotomy that does a disservice to the study of literature. In addition, listening and reading, as well as speaking and writing, are grouped together in subcategories under each content standard without a clear separation of each component from the other to indicate that they are not identical in nature.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned**. Yes.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established and peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** To some extent. No mention is made of various discussion purposes and roles or using formal criteria for evaluating formal or informal speech.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** For the most part. No mention is made of developing an advanced reading vocabulary.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance.** For the most part. But there are no cultural or literary specifics built into the content standards or performance indicators. The indicators that are there could apply to the literature of any language or culture in the world.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established and peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** Yes.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** Yes.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. There is no performance indicator dealing with the history and nature of the English language. No mention is made of the distinction between its oral forms and the written language.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases**. For the most part. Complete details are not provided on all sources of information and there is no mention of developing useful or open-ended research questions.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear**. Yes.

2. **They are specific**. Yes.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools)**. For the most part. A few performance indicators point to processes, not products.

4. **They are comprehensive**. For the most part. The various gaps in coverage are mentioned above.

5. **They are demanding.**
a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** For the most part. It is not clear how demanding the reading and literature objectives are because they contain no literary specifics to indicate the level of difficulty. The intellectual demands would be clear, in the high-school years for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No. The performance indicators are not indexed to reading levels or illustrative reading materials. New York provides a long list of titles at several educational levels in a companion resource guide, but these are not suggested titles, just lists of titles that teachers from across the state have submitted.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples**. To some extent. Some writing samples are provided in the standards document and in a resource guide to suggest the nature of growth.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark**. For the most part. Some examples are offered in the standards and in the accompanying resource guide.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend**. For the most part. Without any specifics for reading and literary study, and without any index to reading levels or examples of specific literary works, it is not clear how the standards can lead to a common core of academic expectations for all students in the state.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature**. Yes. The attempt to get students to discuss, recognize, or learn about the "cultural" features of a text seems to be a shorthand for learning stereotypes. Most K-12 students cannot distinguish what is cultural from what is idiosyncratic to an author because they haven't been able to read with the breadth and depth of an adult literary critic. How many high-school students will be able to "read and interpret works of recognized literary merit from several world cultures and recognize the distinguishing features of those cultural traditions?" I doubt that most could do so for American literature alone.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** Yes. The criteria for literary language indicate that literary response "should be connected to the individual's prior knowledge and experience."

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** No. This is not implied by the standards or indicators.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** For the most part. The document seems to speak in tongues when it describes what it believes constitutes growth in understanding the basis for analytic criteria and ends up in a swamp of cultural relativism. At the elementary level, students are to "recognize that the criteria that one uses to analyze and evaluate anything depend on one's point of view and purpose for the criteria." At the intermediate level, students are to "understand that within any group there are many different points of view depending on the particular interests and values of the individual and recognize these differences in perspective in texts and presentations." At the commencement level, they are to "evaluate the quality of the texts and presentations from a variety of critical perspectives within the field of study." According to the document's "criteria for analytical language," they must also learn that "a thorough analysis requires ... recognizing the relative validity of divergent points of view" and that the "criteria for analysis and evaluation derive from the shared values of a group." (No word here about the quality and weight of the evidence or the logic of the reasoning.) Although students first learn that the criteria one uses depend on one's point of view and purpose and that many different points of view, interests, and values exist within a group, they later learn that criteria for analysis and evaluation derive from the "shared values of a group." This seems to be self-contradictory as well as developmentally backwards. Moreover, it implies that logical reasoning itself may be grounded in a group's particular values and thus may differ from group to group. If teachers believe that logical reasoning is itself culture-specific, their students may not be taught to apply logical reasoning to problem-solving when they disagree with people they are told are culturally different from them.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** Yes. There is blatantly politicized content in most of the samples of student writing in the standards document. While politically sophisticated teachers with an academic orientation would not see them as acceptable examples of writing or as based on acceptable assignments, totally naive teachers may well believe that the assignments or what these students express are acceptable if not desirable. One assignment asks fourth graders to show how "the Iroquois way of life appreciated and protected the world of nature.... Then they were to write about whether these activities harmed the natural world compared to the way we do things today." The student whose writing is shown clearly learned what was intended: "They worshipped the natural world, they didn't hurt it.... Today our tools use electric power and are not as good for the environment."

In another piece of writing, an eleventh grader comments on *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by stressing his conclusion that "it must be the society in America, not the people, which fosters the inequality seen by blacks and other minorities." An essay on anorexia implies that close middle-class families are potentially bad families for many children and subtly instigates hostility to the (white) middle class. A ninth-grader role-plays being a Vietnamese girl about to be massacred in the My-Lai incident. In writing about his handicap, an older student implies that our society is prejudiced against all kinds of people, including malformed ones, and notes that he has chosen to confront this prejudice by refusing an operation to make his malformed arm normal length (even though one would expect a rational child with one arm shorter than the other to see many practical reasons—not just cosmetic ones—for wanting an operation to make his arm normal length). A description of the mall at Colonie Center by a ninth grader conveys her materialism, as well as that of the mainstream population she is supposed to represent. An essay reflects an assignment in which a student was asked to critically compare Ben Franklin's autobiography to Frederick Douglass' for the purpose of arguing which one is superior to the other; this assignment is a masterpiece of manipulation, as if anyone promoting a work ethic could be judged superior to someone arguing against slavery.

Another problematic aspect of these manipulative samples is that many do not appear to be authentic pieces of student writing at the grade levels indicated. It is hard to believe that a ninth grader wrote: "A stylistic contrast that adds diversity to the piece is the contrast between the fluid, 'blotchy' trees and the clean, sharp lines of the two figures. This difference seems to make a statement about the difference between humanity, which is nervous and preoccupied with details, and nature, which is fluid, eternal, and cyclic." Or that a normal fifth grader wrote about a girl anxious about taking her SATs in math, and wrote as follows: "When the test came, she tackled it, and did perfectly." Or that a normal ninth grader wrote—in reference to Colonie Mall—"Macy's takes up about one half of the entire mall. Almost all of the items in the store were completely out of my price range. It is filled with clothing, lamps, bedroom sets, and all kinds of household items—almost everything you'd ever want." Whether or not these writing samples were doctored, they convey such a jaundiced view of this country that one must worry about what students will be given to read and asked to write about in New York's assessments.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow**. No.

Ohio

Summary

Strengths: It not only expects students to demonstrate use of standard English in writing and in formal oral presentations, it also has strong performance objectives for writing and for language conventions in both writing and speaking. Performance objectives are overall fairly strong.

Limitations: Too many standards are neither clear nor measurable. It contains no literary or cultural specifics at all. It does not address development of a reading vocabulary and word study adequately, in part because it restricts teachers to contextual approaches.

Recommendations: The document needs to eliminate jargon and cryptic statements. It also needs to eliminate the suggestion that students should bring other languages to the English language-arts classroom as well as its narrow, dogmatic approach to beginning reading. It should explicitly acknowledge the United States of America as the national entity in which students are to be prepared to participate as citizens and to clarify what literary and linguistic heritage these standards draw from. Details need to be spelled out for systematic word study at all grade levels, as well as for the study of the history and nature of the English language. Above all, the document needs to spell out some cultural and literary specifics in its standards, such as some key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions, to make clear its academic expectations for students' reading level at different educational levels as well as their knowledge of the nature and history of this country's literary and civic culture. At the same time, it needs to eliminate the anti-literary and anti-academic thrust of many objectives, comments, or activities, which serves to counter the strength of its objectives.

	Ohio	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	13	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	11	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	21	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	13	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	58	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	12	8
Final Sum*	46	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Ohio

Date of draft examined: 1996

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** To some extent. It contains many obscure or cryptic objectives such as "demonstrate ability to choose appropriate media to clarify attitudes toward cultural diversity," "examine cultural and gender stereotyping and mind sets," and "listen courteously and respond honestly to diverse literary works that represent various cultures and genders" (all in grade 4). How does a choice of media clarify attitudes toward diversity? What attitudes? How does one examine a "mindset"? What are various genders and how does a work "represent" a gender? This is not public language.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** No. The document recommends that "students should have guidance and frequent opportunities to ... bring their own cultural values, languages, and knowledge to their classroom reading and writing."

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** Yes. It expects use of "standard forms" for oral communication from grade 1 on and for written work. In an overview of its performance objectives for grades 3-5, it indicates that "the conventions of written and spoken English are attended to in editing writing and on occasions when formal speech is required."

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** No. Students are to read literature that demonstrates "a broad sweep of American cultures (sic) as they are embodied in literary texts." There is apparently no nation to which Ohio belongs, much less a national literature to which its writers have contributed. Students are consistently expected to "imagine and value worlds other than their own" (Program Goals), "compose" about such themes as "animals, long ago, Native Americans, authors, Japanese culture" (kindergarten), "recognize that there are different cultures and subcultures" (kindergarten), "identify some features of different cultures and subcultures" (grade 1), compose ... in response to content area themes and stories ... such as native Americans, authors, other cultures" (grade 2), "extend knowledge of dialects, language differences, and cultures" (grade 7), and "broaden knowledge of different cultures" (grade 8). They are never expected to learn specifically about, deepen, and value their own literary and cultural heritage as Americans.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** No. There is even an implicit denial that we are citizens of one nation, never mind of one broad civic culture.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** No. Ohio specifies that the "learner will integrate the three cueing systems when reading texts: semantic texts..., structural cues..., and grapho-phonetic cues," implying that students will not be expected to apply decoding skills independently of their use of context clues. Throughout its document, it specifies use of a "whole language" approach.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality**. Yes. Its program goals expect students to "engage in independent reading programs which are tailored to their individual interests, needs, and personalities and which are supported by classroom, school, and community libraries."

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels**. Yes. Subject and performance objectives are presented for each grade from kindergarten to grade 12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** For the most part. They are grouped in categories titled reading, writing, listening/visual literacy, and oral communication. Literary study has no category of its own but is divided and covered in different ways under reading and listening/visual literacy.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned**. Yes.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** For the most part. It does not clearly state that students will learn the use of different roles and purposes for discussion.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades.**

They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes. For the most part. But it provides no details for expanding vocabulary knowledge. In fact, it limits students' vocabulary growth to those words that they happen to hear in the media or encounter in their reading (for example, "the learner will understand the meanings of unfamiliar and multiple meaning words in context"). It further specifies the use of "context clues" or the dictionary as the way to expand a reading vocabulary; i.e., there is no systematic word study through the grades.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance.** For the most part. The standards cover literary elements, genres, and responses well. No mention is made of using various interpretative lenses. Nor does it contain any literary or cultural specifics. There is no hint of the existence of an American literature, no matter how inclusive or broadly conceived. A suggested reading list appears in an appendix, but without any formal relationship to the document, probably because of the philosophy of those who controlled the content of the document. A page is gratuitously inserted between the grade 11 and 12 curriculum objectives warning readers that one should beware of all reading lists because "some people or groups will inevitably try to mandate reading lists to 'fit' some particular political or social agenda." This attempt at intimidation is a nice example of the pot calling the kettle black, as if the absence of a list is not a reflection of a political or social agenda. And as if the statement, quoted above in A.4, is itself not an indication of a particular political or social agenda.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** Yes. Between its subject objectives (which focus chiefly on process) and its performance objectives (which focus more on the quality of what students compose), Ohio addresses writing well.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** Yes. All students are expected to demonstrate use of language conventions in writing and in formal oral presentations. A few different details are given at different grade levels.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** To some extent. Throughout, students are expected to "examine" or "extend" their "knowledge of dialects, language differences, and cultures." And in grade 8 they "explore word etymology." But the history of the English language does not appear as a subject objective, nor does the distinction between its oral and written forms.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** For the most part. The document addresses these fairly well. It does not mention development and use of open-ended, useful research questions, or the use of a variety of sources of information beyond printed sources.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** To some extent. As mentioned in A.1, the document suffers from the use of jargon, and many subject objectives are obscure. Such subject objectives as "participate in a variety of oral interpretations" and "use the reading process to develop an awareness of human rights and freedom" (both in grade 10) are uninterpretable. Others, such as "examine global issues, including tolerance, through writing activities" and "write to broaden awareness of cultural perspectives" (both in grade 6), are puzzling. It is not obvious how sixth graders can "examine" a global issue through writing. One normally examines an issue by reading about it, viewing material on it, or talking to someone about it. Nor is it clear how a sixth grader broadens awareness of "cultural perspectives" by writing rather than reading about a "cultural perspective," whatever that is. In contrast, the performance objectives tend to be clear (e.g., "identify an implied thesis," "identify statements based on fact," "identify the apparent purpose of the selection" (grade 9)).

2. **They are specific.** For the most part. Although subject or instructional objectives like "facilitate learning across the curriculum through critical listening and viewing," "focus listening and viewing on themes and/or plots," or "use language imaginatively" (all in grade 9) are too general, performance objectives tend to be specific.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable,**

comparable results across students and schools). To some extent. Subject objectives like "value the thinking and language of others and self," "value and apply collaborative skills in the writing process," and "develop a personal voice in writing" (all grade 9) are not measurable. Such performance objectives as "identify within nonfiction texts the difference between facts and opinions" or "effectively use the appropriate reference sources and materials necessary for gathering information" (grade 6) are.

4. **They are comprehensive**. For the most part. See the gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** For the most part. For example, the instructional objectives under "structure" and "meaning construction" for writing show a meaningful progression in difficulty through the grades. So do the performance objectives for writing. But the reading and literature objectives contain no literary specifics to indicate the level of difficulty. The intellectual demands would be clear, in the high-school years for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No. There is exactly one literary author mentioned in the objectives. Dickens' use of chapter endings is noted as exemplifying how structure is related to meaning. Several authors are mentioned in the Comments/Activities for the elementary grades.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples**. No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** To some extent. Comments and activities listed next to the instructional objectives often give examples.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** For the most part. There can be for writing. But without literary and cultural specifics, and some index of reading level expected for each assessed level, it is not clear how Ohio's objectives can lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** To some extent. When first graders are expected to learn about "some features of different cultures and subcultures;" second graders to "identify customs and languages of cultures or subcultures" and "identify cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication" for such traits as "courage, self-respect, responsibility;" fourth graders that literary works "represent various cultures and genders;" sixth graders that a point of view is a "cultural perspective;" and seventh graders they can examine "cultures through their reading experiences;" it is likely that they will be taught that whatever features they see or read about in a particular selection are characteristic of that entire group.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** Yes. In grade 9, a comment on an objective recommends that "students incorporate personal experiences, prior knowledge and the text itself into their own interpretations." One must feel grateful here that the text is to play at least some role in the interpretation. In grade 10, for the first performance objective after reading a literary selection, the student is to "relate a personal experience to the literary work" to demonstrate understanding. In grade 11, the student may "relate a personal experience or the experience of another, gleaned through literature, to the literary work." In grade 12, the student is to "compare what is being read to a personal experience or the experience of another, gleaned through literature" to demonstrate understanding.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** To some extent. In grade 2, for example, the examples in Comments/Activities sometimes suggest specific "global and multicultural issues." In grade 8, students are to "explore global issues through writing," and examples are given. Incidentally, no mention is made of national issues (probably in keeping with the document's implicit denial of American nationhood).

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** To some extent. In grade 9, students are to "recognize that there may be more than one interpretation of reading selections" and to "recognize diverse literary interpretations." In grade 10, they are to explain why there may be more than one, but no possible reasons (like deliberate ambiguity on the part of the author) are suggested in the Comments/Activities. Nor are any differences between informational and literary selections suggested as an influence on the number of interpretations possible. In grade 9, they are to "support an interpretation of a text by locating and citing specific information," but there is no mention of such qualifying conditions as the weight and qual-

ity of the information. In grade 11, students are to "assess the validity of diverse literary interpretations" and to "assess the validity and quality of a selection read." But no possible bases are offered for these assessments.

A cynicism about the possibility of rational thinking is wittingly or unwittingly encouraged in this document by the prominence accorded the need for students to be on the alert for bias. Ohio wants students in grade 4 to "examine cultural and gender stereotyping and mind sets," and in grades 6 and 7 to "recognize authors' attitudes (bias/slant) toward a subject" and to "identify propaganda techniques in reading texts." Under performance objectives for high-school students, it wants students to be able to "recognize bias" (grade 9) and "identify the use of propaganda" (grade 10) in "everyday functional reading materials." Grade 10 students must also "demonstrate the ability to recognize the effects of personal bias on meaning while listening," and "distinguish between objective oral presentations and slanted or biased presentations." There are other examples. Paranoia pervades this document.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** To some extent. Students are to "extend understanding of the uniqueness and universality ... of human experiences through multicultural literature." Are indeed all experiences unique and universal? And is multicultural literature the only literature that conveys the "universality" of human experiences?

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** Yes. While it "recognizes that instructional decision-making is best left in the hands of classroom teachers," it nevertheless very explicitly notes that the model curriculum it offers may require "change from current practice in both content and methods of instruction." Indeed, Ohio makes no bones that teachers are to use a whole-language approach. In grade one, Ohio wants students to "identify a global issue through an interdisciplinary, whole language experience." In grade two, to make absolutely clear what it wants when students "examine a global issue ... following a listening/viewing experience," the document suggests "environment (whales, forest, clean air), use whole language."

The document is dogmatic about other pedagogical practices as well. In grade 4, teachers are told that "discussion of literary form should be introduced where it leads to a richer understanding of a book and then only after children have had time to respond to it personally." Ohio strongly promotes heterogeneous grouping and cooperative learning at all grades as if there were a clear, large, and consistent body of evidence for these practices. In fact, there is almost no body of research evidence at all in favor of heterogeneous grouping as a replacement for advanced placement or honors courses in the high school.

Oklahoma

Summary

Strengths: The document is written clearly for the general public. It has a strong reading strand, and it points to a systematic approach to the development of a reading vocabulary. It also has good coverage for writing and research skills. Its standards tend to be clear and measurable.

Limitations: Its standards are not clearly sorted into coherent organizing strands. It contains no literary or cultural specifics to indicate expected level of reading or expected literary and cultural knowledge. There are no objectives on the history and nature of the English language, and very little detail over the grades on standard English conventions.

Recommendations: The document needs to clarify what country it expects students to participate in as citizens and to indicate that students will use standard English in their written work and, at least, for formal oral presentations. It also needs to group its objectives for the English language arts in one place and to develop clearer and more differentiated organizing strands. Details need to be spelled out for the study of the history and nature of the English language. Above all, the document needs to spell out some cultural and literary specifics in its standards, such as some key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions, to make clear its academic expectations for students' reading level at different educational levels as well as their knowledge of the nature and history of this country's literary and civic culture.

	Oklahoma	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	24	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	8	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	16	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	17	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	65	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	2	8
Final Sum*	63	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Oklahoma

Date of draft examined: September 1993

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators**. Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Yes. There is nothing to suggest otherwise.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing, for all standards.** To some extent. The standards suggest the use of conventions for composition, but no specific language is mentioned. No conventions are suggested for oral language.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** No. American literature is not mentioned at all.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens**. For the most part. The overview expects Oklahoma's students to become "literate citizens in a democratic society." But the specific country in which they are to participate as citizens is not mentioned.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Yes. Oklahoma's document is quite clear on this. It separates priority skill B, "Use phonics as a tool to determine unknown words in a reading selection (consonant and vowel sounds)," from priority skill C, "Use picture details and known words in context to determine meanings of unknown words."

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** Yes. It regularly expects elementary-grade students to read "independently" (or "silently") for "increasingly sustained periods of time." It changes the wording a little for the upper grades. It does not specify quantity or quality, however.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes. It has developed criterion-referenced tests for grades 5, 8, and 11.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. Skills are listed by grade level from K to 5, and for the grade spans of 6-8 and 9-12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** To some extent. The strands are Reading, Language Arts (which combines speaking, listening, literature, and composition), and Information Skills, which deals with locating, selecting, evaluating, interpreting, recording, organizing, and presenting information, and contains a separate section on "literature as an essential base of cultural and practical knowledge."

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** For the most part. There are major and minor categories in each strand, but the items are not all of relatively equal importance at their category level (e.g., "Demonstrate a knowledge of and appreciation of various forms of literature" should be at a higher level than "understand fact, opinion and fantasy in print and nonprint media").

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** To some extent. These areas are not adequately covered in the Language Arts strand, in part, probably, because of the way the strands are organized.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** Yes. This strand is very thorough for most reading skills. A well-developed progression on word study to expand vocabulary through the grades appears in the Language Arts strand.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance.** For the most part. However, it contains some odd and unmeasurable literature standards in the section on Information Skills (e.g., "Create an artistic interpretation of a literary selection," "Discover contemporary literature through reading, listening and viewing," and "Use quality literature in specific areas of the curriculum"). More

important, it falls down on the specifics of literary content. Although Oklahoma wants students to "recognize major literary and cultural traditions and use them as a foundation for effective communication," it identifies no literary or cultural traditions, never mind key authors or works.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** Yes. The skills listed in the Language Arts strand and the Information Skills strand together provide good coverage for expectations in writing.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation**. To some extent. The standards do not address the use of conventions in oral language, and there are few specifics over the grades for written language conventions. There is nothing on language conventions for grades 9-12.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. There are no objectives on the history of the English language or distinctions among its oral forms and its written form.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** For the most part. More specifics could have been given about different sources and resources for research, as well as the importance of clear and open-ended questions.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear**. Yes.

2. **They are specific.** To some extent. Many are clear but very general, such as "demonstrate thinking skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing." Or "demonstrate knowledge of and appreciation for various forms (genres) of literature."

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** For the most part. There are variations among strands. The Reading strand contains skills that are more measurable in the way they are written than the Language Arts strand. The verbs "identify," "use," "determine," "demonstrate," "evaluate," "locate," "interpret," "analyze," "summarize," "organize," and "understand" (not followed by "that") appear much more frequently in the Reading strand than in the Language Arts strand.

4. **They are comprehensive**. For the most part. See the gaps noted above.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address**. For the most part. There are good examples of progressive expectations from one educational level to another, e.g., in grades 6-8, students will comprehend and use figurative language and sound devices such as metaphor, simile, personification, rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, and onomatopoeia; in 9-12, hyperbole and analogy are added. In 6-8, students are to demonstrate knowledge of such literary elements as plot, character, setting, theme, conflict, symbolism, and point of view; in 9-12, imagery, flashback, foreshadowing, irony, tone, and allusion are added. In 6-8, students compose a "variety of types of paragraphs, each containing a topic sentence, supporting sentences and a concluding sentence;" in 9-12, they produce "multiparagraph assignments with a thesis, supporting paragraphs and a conclusion." However, the reading and literature objectives contain no literary specifics to indicate level of difficulty. The intellectual demands would be clear, in the high-school years for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples.** No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark**. No.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend**. For the most part. Without any specifics for literature and reading, or any index to reading levels, it is not clear how they can lead to a common core of high expectations for all Oklahoma students.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature**. To some extent. Students are asked in grades 9-12 to "analyze, evaluate and explain the thinking or behavior represented in a work of literature from or about another culture. In the "Languages" section of this document, Oklahoma expects students who are beginners in the study of another language in its "cultural context" to "recognize similarities and differences between the target culture and their own." This approach to the literature of other cultures will encourage the formation of nothing but stereotypes about other groups of people (and often misleading or inaccurate ones at that, depending on what they have read). Pre-college students, especially young students, are unlikely to have read broadly and deeply enough about the culture of any group of people, including their own, to distinguish when a writer's views are idiosyncratic and when they reflect the broader ideas that may permeate the larger society.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences**. To some extent. In grades 9-12, students are to "recognize human universals (archetypes) represented in literature and apply them to their lives." Although one example is given—"initiation"—there are a lot of archetypes that one would not want students to apply to their lives ("death and transfiguration," for example).

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues**. No.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** No.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No. There are no examples in this document.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma**. No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** No.

Oregon

Summary

Strengths: The document has a coherent set of organizing strands. The test specifications for writing, in particular, provide well spelled-out expectations for writing skills.

Limitations: The document is underdeveloped. There is no mention of systematic development of a reading vocabulary, and other benchmarks in reading show little increase in complexity over the grades. Disciplinary coverage is extremely weak in the other areas as well. In addition, there is nothing on the history and nature of the English language. Nor are there literary and cultural specifics to suggest what country these standards are set in—not even a requirement that students study American literature.

Recommendations: The document needs to be strengthened in all areas. Its test specifications and sample tests for writing, especially, contain expectations that might well be incorporated into the standards document itself. This document should indicate explicitly that students are to use standard English in their written work and, at least, in formal oral presentations. It also needs to indicate that one goal of the English language arts and reading is to help students acquire literacy skills to enable them to participate as citizens in American civic life. The document should indicate support for systematic instruction in decoding skills. Details need to be spelled out for systematic word study at all grade levels, and students should be expected to study the history and nature of the English language. Above all, the reading and literature benchmarks need to incorporate some cultural and literary specifics, such as some key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions, to make academic expectations clear for students' reading level at different educational levels as well as their knowledge of the nature and history of this country's literary and civic culture.

	Oregon	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	16	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	12	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	6	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	14	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	48	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	5	8
Final Sum*	43	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Oregon

Date of draft examined: January 1997; (Test Specifications for Reading, Literature, and Writing, April 1997)

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** For the most part. There are a few murky phrases like "develop flow and rhythm of sentences," "analyze and evaluate verbal and nonverbal messages..." (what is a "non-verbal message"?), and "identify ... culturally and historically unique literary devices (e.g., figurative language, allusion, dialect, song, irony, symbolism)."

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Yes. There is nothing to indicate otherwise.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** For the most part. Although the word "English" is not used in any common curriculum goal, content standard, or benchmark, the beginning of the section on English in Oregon's standards document for all subject areas states, "English includes knowledge of the language itself" as well as its use for communication and artistry. "Correct" uses of language are indicated for writing. But they are not specified for speaking.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** No. There are no cultural markers whatsoever in the standards document. If the document had not been put out by the Oregon Department of Education, and the English standards not written in English, one would have no idea where in the world these standards originated. The test specifications for the reading and literature assessments do indicate that "each grade level will have some selections by Oregon and/or Northwest authors" (and most sample passages are by American authors), but to judge from the sample passages, this qualification seems to result in a heavy emphasis on the indigenous peoples of the Northwest.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** No. There is nothing to indicate the civic purposes for acquiring literacy skills.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Unclear. The content standard is "recognize, pronounce and know the meaning of words in text," and the benchmark lists beginning reading strategies in one sentence: "read accurately by using phonics, language structure, word meaning and visual clues."

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** No. There is nothing to indicate that this is a goal.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes. Oregon has developed standardized, criterion-referenced state tests for reading, literature, and writing based on these standards.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. Oregon presents its benchmarks for grades 3, 5, 8, 10, and 12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** Yes. Reading, writing, speaking and listening, literature, and media and technology.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** Yes. So few benchmarks are offered in each strand that they all have to be seen as higher order concerns.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** To some extent. The standards and benchmarks offered in this area deal chiefly with formal speaking. There are no standards on various discussion purposes or roles or on how to participate in discussions. Although there are two curriculum goals for listening, there are no standards or benchmarks for listening.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** To some extent. There are no expectations for systematic development of a reading vocabulary or knowledge of word origins or relationships. The benchmarks themselves show little increase in complexity in reading skills and strategies over the grades. Increases in complexity, to judge from the sample tests, tend to result chiefly from the overall increase in the grade level difficulty of the reading passages selected for assessment.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature.**

They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance. To some extent. Some literary elements are mentioned, and there are some increasing expectations in understanding the elements of a literary work. But there is no requirement for students to read American or British literature or study any particular authors or literary traditions. Students simply read works of "varying complexity from a variety of cultures and time periods." The benchmarks for grade 10 and 12 contain the unrealistic expectation that students can "analyze and evaluate the ways in which a writer has influenced or has been influenced by historical, social and cultural issues and events," a more appropriate assignment for a graduate student, and no sample passages and questions are provided in the April 1997 test specifications to show exactly what is expected here. No mention is made of using different critical lenses.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** To some extent. In the standards document, there is no focus on diction, on the use of criteria for evaluating writing, or on coherence and a logical ordering of ideas. Writing-skill expectations are spelled out more fully, in much more detail, and with increasing expectations from one educational level to another in the test specifications for writing.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** To some extent. Conventions are mentioned, but only a few specifics like paragraphing in grade 5 and documentation in grade 8 are offered to show increasing expectations over the grades. Use of standard English is not mentioned. The test specifications for writing provide many more details at the educational levels assessed.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. There is nothing on the history of the English language, its vocabulary, its structure, or the distinction between its informal and oral forms and its formal and written forms. Dialect is to be learned only as a "culturally and historically unique literary device."

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** To some extent. Common curriculum goals are spelled out, but no content standards or benchmarks are offered aside from one that focuses on locating information using such specific features as table of contents, glossary, and headings. The curriculum goals are not comprehensive. The benchmarks do not mention such resources as dictionaries, thesauruses, or others for research aside from "media" and "technology," or of modes of research, although the test specification pamphlets do indicate the use of these standard resources. There is no mention in the standards document of using focused research questions or analyzing and synthesizing information for research purposes.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** Yes.

2. **They are specific.** Yes.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** Yes.

4. **They are comprehensive**. No. See the gaps mentioned above.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** Only to some extent. There are few differences between common curriculum goals, content standards, and benchmarks. The benchmarks for all grade levels are very similar, and there are few progressions in difficulty or type of task expected from the student. Those that occur are chiefly from grade 10 to grade 12.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples**. No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark**. No.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, compre-**

hensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend. Only to some extent. Without clear indications of level of difficulty and content (such as some specific titles) expected for the reading, literature, and writing benchmarks, they cannot lead to a common core of high academic expectations. The sample test passages and questions suggest the nature of the problem. Those for grades 8 and 10 are clearly at a higher level of reading difficulty than those for grades 3 and 5. Thus, the material on which the literal, inferential, and evaluative questions operate require more reading skill in the higher grades than in the lower grades. But many of the higher-grade passages (especially the literary ones) are relatively easy reading for those grades (e.g., a Gwendolyn Brooks short story at grade 8, a Hemingway short story at grade 10), the passages from which vocabulary items are selected to assess vocabulary knowledge have clearly been selected to illustrate use of the recommended pedagogy (students use context clues that tend to include grade level synonyms for the harder word, which is a bit like loading the dice), and most of the questions do not demand deep thinking or very high-level inferencing. Except for John Steinbeck's description of a tide pool, the grade 10 passages strike me as more suitable for grade 8, and many of the questions suitable for grade 5.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** No.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** To some extent. The reading benchmarks expect students to connect reading selections to "texts, experiences, issues and events."

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** Yes. From grade 5 on and especially in grade 12.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** No.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No. There are none.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** No.

Tennessee

Summary

Strengths: It expects students to use standard English in their writing, and it expects students to do independent reading over the grades.

Limitations: The document is not written for the general public; but it is not even in clear prose for educators and local school boards. The objectives for each educational level mix higher and lower objectives. Literature and reading standards are extremely weak. Too many standards overall are neither clear, nor specific, nor measurable.

Recommendations: The document needs to be completely rewritten in clear prose, with a coherent organizational scheme, sorted objectives, and specific and measurable standards. It needs to make clear that one goal is to prepare students for participation in the civic life of this particular country and that American literature is one body of literature they are to study. It should also clarify that students will receive systematic instruction in phonics. Details need to be spelled out for systematic word study at all grade levels, students should be expected to study the history and nature of the English language, and some literary specifics should be incorporated into its standards at all educational levels, such as key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions, to signal academic expectations for students' reading level as well as their knowledge of the nature and history of this country's literary and civic culture.

	Tennessee	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	19	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	8	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	9	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	2	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	38	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	2	8
Final Sum*	36	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Tennessee

Date of draft examined: December 1996

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** To some extent only. The document indicates it is intended for educators and school boards, not the general public. There is also some jargon (e.g., what are "structural" skills for writing?). The deeper problem is the large number of assertions that are not clearly interpretable. For example, what are "visual media?" (One can look at books as well as at e-mail messages.) What does it mean to respond to literature "by making ... visual connections?" What are "cognitive strategies to evaluate text critically?" (Are there other kinds of strategies for this purpose?) What is expected by "use research to validate personal interpretations?" Or by "construct meaning from verbal and non-verbal clues?" Or by "interact with text to form personal, reasonable interpretations?" (What is an unreasonable interpretation?) What is meant by "identify and begin to use a variety of resources to revise and edit writing"?

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Yes. There is nothing to indicate otherwise.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** For the most part. The document expects students to "recognize and demonstrate appropriate knowledge of standard English" in writing through the grades. For speaking, the expectation is only for "appropriate oral language." Indeed, students are to "recognize various dialects ... demonstrating their appropriate use based on purposes and audiences." If the document writers expect students to acquire and use standard spoken and written English, they should make that expectation explicit.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** No. The sole reference to the literature students read refers to "literature which includes multicultural, gender, and ethnic diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects."

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** To some extent. Although the preface indicates that schools must prepare students to become "informed, literate citizens," there is nothing to indicate that they are to become literate American citizens. Indeed, the Goal Statement for Reading from K-12 indicates that they are to "gain knowledge of themselves as world citizens."

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Unclear. It combines reading strategies in one sentence ("picture and context clues, substitutions, phonetic rules and exceptions, work recognition, and rhyming words").

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** Yes. The goals for reading from K-12 expect students to "read independently for pleasure and information," although they do not indicate quantity.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels**. Yes. They are presented in clusters for K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and by grade level for 9, 10, 11, and 12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** Yes. They are grouped in strands called writing, reading, listening and speaking, and viewing and representing (which deals with media and technology). Literary study is subsumed under reading but is given short shrift there.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** No. All learning expectations for each cluster or grade level are presented in a single list, with no distinctions made between higher and lower level or various kinds of understandings. For example, grade 11 expectations in reading include "develop an understanding of and respect for multicultural, gender, and ethnic diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects," "respond to literature by making personal, historical, and visual connections," and "develop skills in making inferences and recognizing unstated assumptions." The first is not a completely academic (or comprehensible) expectation, the second is a broad top-level, process-oriented goal for literary study that has no content (and is not completely intelligible), and the third is skill-oriented and belongs under informational reading. Clear and coherent subcategories under learning expectations are needed in this document.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** For the most part. While some important learnings are mentioned, such as the use of specific group discussion skills, the qualities of formal speaking, and evaluation of

oral presentations, there is nothing on the use of various discussion roles. Further, some expectations included in this strand are not fully intelligible and it is not clear why some are there. For example, what does it mean to "define and solve problems rationally and creatively" and why is it under listening and speaking? What does it mean to "demonstrate an understanding of and respect for diversity" in listening and speaking? Why are students to "demonstrate skills in analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of literary works through spoken language"? Why not through writing too, and why aren't the skills expected in the reading strand to begin with?

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** To some extent. It is possible to discern the development of some reading skills over the grades, but not very easily. On the other hand, there are almost no useful details for the development of a reading vocabulary, which is mentioned. It is hardly adequate to mention "using contextual and reference skills" in grades 6-8, and nothing more in higher grades. Nor are various types of textual features, genres, and purposes for reading spelled out anywhere.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and cultural significance.** No. This is the weakest section of this document. There is almost nothing on literary study until grades 3-5, and all that appears there is "identify literary genres" and "identify and interpret figurative language." Grades 6-8 adds "literary elements" to the second assertion, but there is nothing more, or more specific, than that. There is no mention of using various interpretative or critical lenses, indeed no mention of analyzing literature at all. At higher grade levels, expectations deal chiefly with making personal responses to literature. There are no literary specifics of any kind, not even an indication that students should read "classic" and "contemporary" literature, or literature from various periods of time. Only in grade 12 are students expected to "apply elements of literature and literary devices to evaluate critically an author's work," but even that statement is unclear in meaning. Expectations for literary study are poorly expressed in this document.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** For the most part, these are addressed, but not very clearly or in an organized way. They expect "organized writing containing focused, well-developed ideas," the use of varied sentences and appropriate transitions, various purposes and audiences for writing, revising of writing, and use of writing processes. However, there is nothing on writing to learn techniques and use of developed evaluation criteria.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** To some extent. Use of written language conventions is mentioned, but no more than that appears. And there is nothing on the use of conventions for oral language, only use of "appropriate language."

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. Nothing on any of these items.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** To some extent. Obtaining, interpreting, and using information is mentioned in the viewing and representing strand, and there is some mention of summarizing and paraphrasing information for research reports. But there is nothing on the development of useful research questions and types of sources, the need to evaluate information from various sources, or many other issues involving the process and substance of research.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear**. To some extent. As noted in section A, many are not clear in meaning.

2. **They are specific.** No. Most tend to be too broad (e.g., "extend reading vocabulary," "use cognitive strategies to evaluate text critically," "analyze the impact of media on daily life," or "utilize appropriate verbal and non-verbal feedback in a variety of situations").

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** Generally no. Most are unmeasurable for several reasons. The pre-

cise meanings of some are not clear. Many are much too broad. Many are completely process-oriented (e.g., "practice a variety of appropriate organizational strategies to develop writing on various topics" or "engage in problem solving through group discussions"). Some are not academic expectations (e.g., demonstrate an understanding of and respect for multicultural and ethnic diversity in language"). Some are simply unmeasurable as stated (e.g., "continue to respond actively and imaginatively to literature," "interact with text to form a personal interpretation," "develop critical listening skills," or "recognize the influence of an author's background, gender, environment, audience, and experience on a literary work").

4. **They are comprehensive.** To some extent. But see the gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**
a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** No. Some strands are a little better than others. But there are too few increases in intellectual difficulty visible across the strands. In writing, there are almost no significant differences in intellectual expectations from grade 6 to 12.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples**. No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** No.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** No. The expectations for Tennessee students are stated so inadequately and with so little emphasis on clear, qualitative results that they do not appear to be capable of leading to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature**. No.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences**. To some extent. This is implied by the regular expectation that they are to make personal interpretations or responses to literature.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues**. No. This does not come through in these expectations.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence**. No. This may be the meaning intended by "reasonable" in "interact with text to form personal, reasonable interpretations" and by the expectation that students are to "use research to validate personal interpretations."

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No. There are no examples offered.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** To some extent. A constructivist approach is somewhat implied by the way in which literary study is handled.

Texas

Summary

Strengths: Most of its standards are clear, specific, and measurable, and they cover most areas in the English language arts well. It expects students to be given systematic instruction in decoding skills.

Limitations: Reading vocabulary is not developed systematically over the grades in a meaningful way. There are no literary or cultural specifics to speak of, except for one mention of American literature in grade 11 and one mention of British literature in grade 12. Except for the one mention of American literature, there is nothing in this set of standards to indicate the country in which these standards are set. In addition, the document hints in introductory material to each grade level that other languages besides English may be used in the English language-arts class.

Recommendations: The document needs first to make clear that one goal of English language-arts and reading programs is to prepare students with the literacy skills they need for informed participation in the civic life of this country. There needs to be a broader view about how reading vocabulary is systematically developed. The document needs to remove from all grade-level introductions its suggestion that other languages may be used in the English language-arts class. Above all, some literary and reading specifics should be incorporated into its standards at all educational levels, such as key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions, to signal clear expectations for students' reading level as well as their knowledge of the nature and history of this country's literary and civic culture.

	Texas	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	18	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	12	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	20	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	18	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	68	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	7	8
Final Sum*	61	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Texas

Date of draft examined: April 1997

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** For the most part. There are occasional but very important statements whose meanings are completely unclear. At all grade levels under listening/speaking the student is to "gain and share knowledge of one's culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of cultures." Under reading, the student is to "increase knowledge of one's culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of culture." To do this, the K-3 student is expected to "connect life's experience with the life experiences, language, customs and culture of others." Even if this were a set of standards for an anthropology course, the intended meaning of these statements is obscure. Cultures are not generally considered idiosyncratic constructs.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** No. At each grade level, the introductory material states that "for ... students whose first language is not English, students' native language may be needed as a foundation for English language acquisition and language learning." This would seem to mean that other languages than English may be used in the English language arts class. It is not clear how the English-speaking teacher and English-speaking students can interact with students using, say, Urdu or Japanese in the English language-arts class or how development in English will be enhanced.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** For the most part. Before grade 4, written language conventions are expected, but the specific language is not mentioned. Standard English usage is explicitly expected in writing from grade 4 through 8, and the conventions of standard written English are explicitly expected from 9-12. Standard conventions are not indicated as expectations for speaking in K-8, but they are for 9-12.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** Yes. American literature is mentioned once, in grade 11.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** No. Except for one mention of American literature, one would never know what country these standards come from. Civic literacy and the need for advanced literacy skills for participation in American civic life are not mentioned as goals of English language-arts curricula.

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Yes. Expectations for learning and using decoding skills are spelled out in a separate section in grade 1. ("The student uses letter-sound knowledge to decode written language.")

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** No. At each grade level, students are expected to "read on their own or listen to texts read aloud." The word "or" suggests an option.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. Standards are presented for each grade from K-12. However, a large number, if not most, are identical within grade level clusters, such as 6-8 and 9-12. This renders the grade-by-grade presentation much less meaningful.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** Yes. They are organized under writing, reading, and speaking/listening. Objectives for research are in a distinct subsection of the reading section, and objectives for literary study are generally separated from objectives for informational reading in the reading section.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** Yes. All objectives and subobjectives are organized in clear subsections.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** For the most part. However, the standards don't clearly address the use and adjustment of rules for group discussion for different purposes as well as the different roles participants can take. An elective speech course for the high school level contains excellent material on these matters.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** For the

most part. Reading skills are progressively and thoroughly developed through the grades, although in grade-level clusters, not grade by grade. The development of a reading vocabulary is given a great deal of attention at all grade levels, but the wording of the objectives implies a narrow pedagogy oriented chiefly to the use of context before grade 9, seemingly excluding word study independent of context. Students are to "draw on experiences to bring meanings to words in context (for example, figurative language, multiple-meaning words, analogies)." The important difference between the use of contextual approaches only and the use of both contextual and noncontextual approaches is obscured by the use of the word "systematic" to describe word study here; in fact, the only approaches suggested are not systematic in nature but are used when unknown words happen to turn up in the student's reading. From grade 9 on, students are to "rely on context to determine meanings of words and phrases" such as figurative language, idioms, multiple meaning words, and technical vocabulary, although they are also expected to "read and understand analogies."

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance.** For the most part. Literary expectations are addressed in the reading and listening strands, and deal with a variety of literary genres, elements, and responses. But no mention is made of using various critical lenses, and there are no literary specifics at all, except for one mention of "American and other world literature" at grade 11 and of "British and other world literature" at grade 12. In other grades, students read only "world literature." They are also expected at all grade levels to "read to increase knowledge of one's culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of cultures." This is a completely indecipherable sentence.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** For the most part. Almost all of these components are addressed well. Students are also expected to use criteria developed by others as well as themselves for critiquing their writing. From grade four on, student papers are expected to be revised for coherence, progression, and logical support of ideas. Surprisingly, the development of a thesis, controlling idea, or focus is not mentioned in the high school years in the writing section. The presenting and advancing of a clear thesis shows up only in the listening/speaking sections, where, among other things, students are to "choose valid proofs from reliable sources to support claims" and "use appropriate appeals to support claims." Because rhetorical features are spelled out clearly in the listening/speaking sections, the expectations for informational and persuasive discourse are much stronger in that strand than in the writing sections during the secondary-school years. The writing sections should be strengthened in these areas.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** For the most part. These are addressed with some detail throughout the grades in the writing sections. Oral language conventions are not addressed in the elementary grades, but are expected in the high-school grades.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** To some extent. The nature of English vocabulary and its spelling is dealt with through the study of the origins of English words through the grades. In grades 6-8, students are to "understand the influence of other languages and cultures on the spelling of English words." Grammar is mentioned as part of writing conventions. However, there is nothing on the history of the English language or on the distinctions between its oral forms and the written form.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** Yes. Research processes are extremely well handled through the grades, particularly the use of good research questions.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** For the most part. See A.1 for some problematic objectives.

2. **They are specific.** For the most part.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** For the most part. See A.1 and E.7 for some problematic objectives.

4. **They are comprehensive**. For the most part. See the gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** For the most part. All areas show increasing intellectual difficulty through the grades, although generally from one cluster of grade levels to another. However, it is not clear how demanding the reading and literature standards are. They contain no literary specifics to indicate the level of difficulty. The intellectual demands would be clear, at the high-school level for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples**. No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** No.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** For the most part. Without expected reading and writing levels and some literary specifics, it is not clear how there can be a common core of high academic expectations for all Texas students.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** To some extent. This is not stated directly, but from the middle grades on, the standards expect students to "recognize distinctive and shared characteristics of cultures." Such a goal is not possible for most students before graduate school. It is unlikely that most students graduate from high school with a good understanding of just American culture alone. To understand any modern, complex culture requires an enormous amount of reading in various disciplines, contemporary as well as historical. The very unrealistic expectation that young students can recognize distinctive and shared characteristics of "cultures" can make sense only if one assumes that reading a small number of literary texts about a group of people will convey all the complexities within that group, and convey them accurately. There is no empirical evidence to support such an assumption.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** Yes. For example, students are regularly enjoined to "compare text events with own and other reader's experiences (as if one could do this for *Peter Pan* or *The Phantom Tollbooth*), "connect literature to historical context, current events, and own experiences," and "draw upon own background to provide connection to texts."

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues**. To some extent. See E.2 above.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** No. The need for "valid interpretations" is mentioned throughout the document.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No. No examples are offered.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma.** No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** To some extent. Systematic noncontextual word study is clearly discouraged, at least before grade 9. Students are expected to read their lives into the literature they read, or to connect literature to their lives. They are also enjoined by the standards to engage in collaborative "composing." For example, in grade 10, students are to "develop drafts both alone and collaboratively," and, in the middle grades, to "collaborate with other writers to compose, organize, and revise a variety of types of texts." Collaborative composing is a trendy writing practice that has little if any support in solid research evidence as an activity for improving student writing.

Utah

Summary

Strengths: The K-6 document is written clearly for the general public. Standards cover most areas of the English language arts and reading quite well, and most standards are clear, specific, and measurable. Among its strong features is the attention it pays to vocabulary development, in speaking, reading, and writing. It also has an innovative section on developing a spelling vocabulary. The high-school writing tasks are demanding and well thought out.

Limitations: There are no literary and cultural specifics at all, not even a requirement for students to study American literature, and no mention of preparation for civic participation as one goal of the English language arts and reading. It too strongly favors a constructivist approach to literary reading.

Recommendations: The document needs to make clear that one goal of the English language arts and reading is to prepare students for participation in the civic life of this particular country and that American literature is one body of literature they are to study. It should also clarify that students will be given systematic instruction in phonics and study the history and nature of the English language. Above all, some literary specifics should be incorporated into its standards at all educational levels, such as key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions, to signal academic expectations for students' reading level as well as their knowledge of the nature and history of this country's literary and civic culture.

	Utah	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	16	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	9	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	22	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	24	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	71	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	7	8
Final Sum*	64	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Utah

Date of draft examined: K-6, 1996; 7-12, 1993

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators**. Yes. The documents are reasonably free of jargon and obscure statements. The content and skill progressions of the 7-12 document are not easy to grasp; its format differs completely from that of K-6, as all "thinking, reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills" are organized around a series of five papers to be written at each grade level.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** No. The K-6 document states that students may, at every grade level, as part of the development of oral language through speaking, "use a primary language when it provides greater facility to explore ideas that may later be expressed in standard English." How the Urdu-speaking child can explore her ideas in Urdu in the English language arts class is not clear. Nor is it clear how the English-speaking teacher can handle groups of students speaking in Japanese, Korean, Polish, or Tagalog.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** For the most part. Neither document states explicitly in its standards or objectives that students are to use standard English orally or in writing. But both the oral language and writing sections in the K-6 document expect "correct usage," while the 7-12 document expects "correctness" in finished pieces of writing.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays**. No. There is no mention of American literature anywhere in either document. If the documents were not identified as coming from Utah and were not printed in the English language, one would not have a clue as to where in the world these standards originate.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** No. The 7-12 document is "designed to provide students with maximum career opportunities and advancements, as well as provide a solid foundation for further education."

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** For the most part. The introduction to each grade level states that even beginning students will "simultaneously and strategically" use semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic "cueing" systems when reading. But the standards themselves discuss "graphophonic cues" or decoding in a separate section at each grade level and indicate that students will identify unknown words through letter/sound correspondence. The intentions of this document need clarification.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality**. Yes. K-6 students at each grade level are to "read frequently in and out of school" and to value reading outside of school.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Unclear.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels**. Yes. Standards are presented for each grade from K-12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts**. To some extent only. The K-6 document is organized around reading, writing, speaking, and listening. But reading combines literary objectives and informational reading, and the literary and informational standards are mixed indiscriminately with each other. The 7-12 document totally integrates thinking, reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills around a series of five papers for each grade so that it is difficult to discern and evaluate how well each area is addressed.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned**. Yes. For each document, there are standards, objectives, and subobjectives that sort out higher-level from lower-level items.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** Yes. The K-6 document does an excellent job in addressing key learnings in listening and speaking. By grade 6, students are to be able to "communicate as a leader and contributor," "summarize and evaluate group activities," and "evaluate the effectiveness of participant interactions." It contains a very strong section on the development of speaking and listening vocabularies, including many kinds of word study and literary techniques that are typically found in reading and literature strands. The 7-12 document follows through on group discussion skills and formal presentations, although there is no explicit mention of use of developed criteria for evaluating formal speech.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** Yes. The standards indicate progressive development of reading skills and vocabulary growth. Although vocabulary work in the reading section emphasizes learning through context and association, it is complemented by the emphasis on ways to develop and demonstrate vocabulary growth in the speaking, listening, and writing sections.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance.** For the most part. The standards address diverse literary elements, genres, and responses. Some literary elements are mentioned in the listening and speaking sections and in the writing section. The standards place a great emphasis on reading aloud, listening to literature, choral readings, and dramatic activities. However, they do not discuss use of various critical lenses, and there are no literary specifics whatsoever at any grade level. In 7-12, the grade level descriptions simply indicate that students are to be introduced to "a greater variety of literature, including practical as well as traditional literary material."

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** Yes. The various elements of writing for communication and expression are thoroughly covered in K-6 and 7-12. The making of effective word choices is a major subsection in each writing section for K-6. An interesting feature of K-6 is the building of a spelling vocabulary.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** Yes. Although the conventions are not labeled "standard English," the standards address in detail both oral and written conventions from K-6, and written conventions from 7-12.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. There is nothing on the nature of English vocabulary, the history of the language, and the distinction between oral forms and the written form. Only grammar or language structure is covered.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** For the most part. These are covered in K-6 and in one of the paper assignment at each grade level from 9-12. The standards do not address the development of open-ended research questions or the use of non-print sources of information.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** Yes..

2. **They are specific**. Yes.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools)**. For the most part. A few are process objectives or attitudinal goals. A few like "validate text with personal experience" are completely unmeasurable.

4. **They are comprehensive**. For the most part. See the gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** For the most part. The standards in each area show an increase in intellectual demand over the grades. But it is not clear how demanding the reading and literature standards are because they contain no literary specifics to indicate level of difficulty. The intellectual demands would be clear, at the high-school level for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples.** No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activi-**

ties, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark. For the most part. In K-6, examples of specific listening or speaking activities are often incorporated into the objective. At the high-school level, the five writing assignments around which all the language skills are clustered are illustrations of what is expected at these levels.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** For the most part. However, without any literary or reading specifics or grade-level reading expectations, it is not clear how there can be a common core of high academic expectations for all Utah students.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** No. There are no implications of this sort in these documents.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** Yes. From K-6, students are to "make connections between personal experience and print." The introductory material suggests that when students talk with others about their reading, they will also be talking about "related life experience." Indeed, students are expected to "use personal experience to interpret and validate text." However, this expectation is fraught with hazards. Would one want students to take an excessive dose of medicine to validate the warning on the medicine bottle's label that it might cause diarrhea or nausea? Or that falling from a second floor window might fracture one's skull after reading about such an incident in the newspaper? This kind of advice is not appropriate either for literary study or for informational reading, but no distinction is offered to restrict it to just literary reading.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** To some extent. Under critical reading for different purposes in the elementary grades, students are to "make connections between information in text and historical/current events" in order to "develop an interpretation of text." Some of the assignments at the high-school level ask students to address social issues or concerns.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** No. This implication does not come through in these documents. Indeed, the documents are good in detailing how to marshal evidence to support an opinion, how to make inferences, and how to appeal to an intended audience.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior**. No. No examples are given in either document.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma**. To some extent. For example, in grade 8, students are taught to "recognize that reading conveys universal experiences."

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow**. To some extent. The K-6 document clearly favors a constructivist approach to literary reading.

Virginia

Summary

Strengths: The document is written clearly for the general public, and its standards are organized in coherent strands. It clearly expects students to use standard English in speaking and writing, and to become literate American citizens. Its standards are for the most part clear, specific, and measurable, and they address most areas adequately. It also contains some general literary and cultural specifics in the high-school grades to make clear what country these standards are set in.

Limitations: The document does not address the history and nature of the English language, and it does not incorporate any specific titles or authors into its standards.

Recommendations: The document should spell out vocabulary development in the high-school grades, address the study of the English language better, and incorporate more literary specifics, such as key works and authors, into its standards at all educational levels to make clear the level of reading it expects as well as the depth and breadth of the literary and cultural heritage it sees necessary for civic and cultural literacy.

	Virginia	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	29	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	12	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	20	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	19	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	80	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	0	8
Final Sum*	80	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Virginia

Date of draft examined: June 1995

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators**. Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Yes. There is nothing to indicate otherwise. The introduction to the English standards expects students to "develop a full command of the English language."

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** Yes. The introduction expects students to use "standard English" in their "speaking and writing vocabularies." No matter what the nature of "students' homes and cultural languages," it seeks "competency in the use of standard English" for all students.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** Yes. Study of American literature is required in the grade 11 standards.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** Yes. Although its primary introduction mentions "literate citizens" only, its introductory material to various grade levels expect links to the study of Virginian and American history and to courses on American and Virginia government. Grade 4 students should read "speeches and other historical documents" related to the study of Virginia, grade 5 students should be "introduced to documents and speeches that are important in the study of American history to 1877," and grade 12 students should read selections that relate to the "study of American and Virginia government."

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials**. Yes. The introduction expects students to "acquire a strong foundation in phonetic principles in the primary grades." The standards in grades 1, 2, and 3 spell out use of "phonetic principles," "meaning clues," and "language structure" in different substandards to indicate that each may be applied separately as well as together.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** To some extent. In grade 6, the descriptive narrative expects students to "read a variety of fiction and nonfiction independently." However, this goal is not mentioned elsewhere even though one might assume it is intended.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes. It expects to use the standards to measure each student's "performance and achievement."

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. The standards are presented for each grade from kindergarten through grade 12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** Yes. They are organized in categories called oral language, reading/literature, writing, and research. Substandards for informational reading are grouped separately from substandards for literary study. Computer/technology standards are offered at the end of grade 5 and grade 8.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** Yes. Under each standard, substandards are organized in meaningful clusters.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** Yes. These standards cover different roles and responsibilities in group discussion, the qualities of effective oral arguments and other oral presentations, and critiques of both group discussion and formal talks.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** Yes. Reading skills are progressively developed, but development is better in K-8 than in 9-12. Both oral and reading vocabularies are expected to develop through explicit learning of a variety of word relationships or types that are spelled out over the grades until grade 8. Informational reading for various purposes is addressed.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students**

should study because of their literary quality and historical significance. For the most part. A variety of literary elements and genres are expected for study, and students in higher grades are expected to examine works from different critical perspectives. In grade 11, it specifies the study of American literature and its literary periods in its standards. It expects students to "contrast periods in American literature," "differentiate among archetypal characters in American literature," describe the major themes in American literature," "describe contributions of different cultures to the development of American literature," and "compare and contrast the works of contemporary and past American poets." In grade 12, it specifies the study of British as well as other world literature, asking students to recognize the characteristics of major chronological eras and to relate literary works and authors to major themes and issues of their eras. It also asks students to "compare and contrast dramatic elements of plays from American, British, and other cultures." In introductory material to the standards in grade 9, it expects students "to be introduced to significant literary works from a variety of cultures and eras, from 1000 A.D. to the present." And in grade 10, the standard states that students will "read and critique literary works from a variety of eras in a variety of cultures." The document regularly enjoins teachers to place a "significant emphasis" on works that have "withstood the test of time," but it also expects them to teach both "classic" and "contemporary" works. What Virginia does not provide is a suggested list of "classic" or "contemporary" works, or key authors or titles from which teachers might choose.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** Yes. The essential elements of writing for expression and communication are addressed with increasing demands at successively higher grade levels. From grade 3 on, students are expected to have a "central idea" and organize their writing. By grade 8, it expects students to make "transitions among paragraphs," and by grade 9 to "arrange paragraphs into a logical progression." Pre-writing and organizing strategies are indicated (as is revising), although no peer critique is mentioned until the higher grades.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** To some extent. Virginia's expectations for the use of standard English in oral and written language are clear in its introduction, and grade-appropriate details are spelled out at each grade level through grade 8 for writing. However, after that, there is just a general statement about editing final copies for "correct" use of "language, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization." And the use of standard conventions is not spelled out in the oral language standards, nor is the phrase "English language conventions" used in the standards themselves.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** To some extent. The reading standards address origins of words and language structure. But there is nothing on the history of the English language, the nature of its oral forms, and the distinction between oral dialects and its written form.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, speaking, and research. These include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** For the most part. Research processes and use of various sources of information are covered clearly and systematically. The standards address the narrowing of a topic, the collecting of information to support a thesis, and the evaluation of the quality and accuracy of the information. They do not address the exploration of open-ended questions before a thesis is formulated.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** Yes. The standards are generally written in jargon-free language.

2. **They are specific.** For the most part. Some substandards are too general, such as "describe the major themes in American literature." Or "use information from texts to clarify or refine understanding of academic concepts." What themes or concepts, for example? And how does one use information to clarify academic concepts?

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** For the most part. Most standards use such verbs as "identify," "compare," "evaluate," "synthesize," "explain," and "use." But some are too general as worded (see, for example, C.5 and D.2 above).

4. **They are comprehensive**. For the most part. But see the gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding**.

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** For the most part. Over the span of many grade levels, each area visibly increases in intellectual demand. But in some areas, there is not too much

difference, if any, in intellectual demand (see C.2 and C.5 above, for example). Moreover, the reading and literature objectives contain no literary specifics to indicate level of difficulty. Intellectual demands would be clear, in the high-school years for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples.** No

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** No.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** For the most part. Without literary specifics and some index of reading difficulty for each assessed level, it is not clear how there can be a common core of high academic expectations for Virginia students.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** No. The standards address the question of cultural influence in an appropriate way. In grade 7, students are to "describe connections between historical and cultural influences and literary selections." In grade 9, students are to "explain the influence of historical context on the form, style, and point of view of a written work." The key word in both standards is "influence." There are always links between a work and its context. But the standards do not set up a literary work as little or nothing more than a mirror of its cultural or historical context. Nor is a cultural monolithic implied by the standard in grade 12 expecting students to "relate literary works and authors to major themes and issues of their eras."

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** No. The standards appropriately expect grade 4 students to "explain how knowledge of the lives and experiences of individuals in history can relate to individuals who have similar goals or face similar challenges" and grade 8 students to "explain how a literary selection can expand or enrich personal viewpoints or experiences." But there is nothing to suggest that students must relate their lives to what they read.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** No.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** No. Students in grade 10 are expected to "examine a literary selection from several critical perspectives," but there is nothing to suggest that all points of view are equally valid or that any kind of text is susceptible of many interpretations.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** No. No examples are offered.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma**. No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** No.

Washington

Summary

Strengths: The document is written in clear prose for the general public. The speaking and listening, reading, writing, and research strands are addressed adequately for the most part. Most standards are clear, specific, and measurable.

Limitations: If this document were not printed in English, one would have no clue from the reading matter for these strands as to the country or language intended for these standards. There is no explicit expectation that students are to study American literature, no explicit expectation that students are to participate in American civic life when they become adults, and no explicit expectation that the language conventions they use are standard English conventions. Standards at the high-school level do not sufficiently reflect evaluative kinds of thinking. Development of a reading vocabulary is not addressed as clearly as it should, and standards do not address the history and nature of the English language. The literature strand is very inadequately addressed; no literary or cultural specifics at all.

Recommendations: The document needs to make clear that one goal of the English language arts and reading is to help students acquire the literacy skills needed for informed participation in American civic life. It should also make clear that students will receive systematic instruction in decoding skills and be expected to engage in regular independent reading throughout the grades. The major task in strengthening this document lies in increasing academic expectations at the high-school level in the wording of the standards. As part of this task, the standards need literary and cultural specifics embedded in them to indicate academic expectations for students' reading level as well as their knowledge of this country's literary and civic culture. The standards also need to reduce their orientation to social issues or literature may cease being taught as literature. Moreover, most English language-arts and reading teachers are not by training equipped to address social issues with sufficient background information.

	Washington	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	17	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	12	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	19	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	15	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	63	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	13	8
Final Sum*	50	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Washington

Date of draft examined: February 1997

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** Yes.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Unclear. Although there is nothing to indicate the use of another language, the word "English" is never used to identify the specific language of the reading, writing, and communication strands, nor is it used in the titles of the strands, or in other introductory material. In other words, the phrase, "the English language arts and reading" never appears. If these strands were not printed in English, one would have no clue from the reading matter for these strands as to the country or language intended for these standards.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** For the most part. The writing and communication strands expect students to use "correct" conventions or "standard" grammar at all levels. However, the word "English" is never used to designate the specific language for which these are conventions.

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** No. There is no mention of American literature anywhere in the reading and literature standards.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens.** No. This expectation is not stated as a goal of the English language arts and reading. The introduction to the entire document wants students to have the "knowledge and skills necessary to lead a successful life now and in the 21st century." The introduction to the reading and literature strand wants them to understand "cultural heritage" (a syntactically awkward phrase with no article or possessive pronoun before it and no clear referent) and acquire "knowledge about the world."

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** For the most part. It expects students to "apply phonetic principles to read including sounding out, using initial letters, and using common letter patterns to make sense of whole words." It needs to strengthen the learning of phonics skills by explicitly expecting students to apply phonics skills to whole words and to interesting written selections consisting chiefly of decodable words.

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** To some extent. Although this expectation is not explicitly stated, it seems to be implied in the standard that students will "develop interests and share reading experiences."

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. Benchmarks for the standards are set at grades 4, 7, and 10.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** Yes. The strands are reading, writing, and communication, which includes listening and speaking.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** Yes. These are all clearly delineated.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** Yes. These are all covered well, including use of variously generated criteria.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** For the most part. Reading skills are clearly and well developed over the grades, including technical reading. However, the development of a reading vocabulary is not given the detailed attention it needs, and seems to exclude systematic word study. It also contains a puzzling expectation. Students in the higher grades are to "examine and increase vocabularies relevant to different contexts, cultures, and communities." Why are English-speaking students increasing vocabularies relevant to different "cultures"? Are these to be non-English words? What exactly is intended here?

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary tradi-**

tions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and cultural significance. To some extent. The standards address different kinds of literary elements, techniques, and responses. However, use of different critical lenses are not mentioned, and there are relatively few details offered over the grades for literary study in comparison to reading skills (e.g., the characteristics of various literary genres). And there are no literary specifics whatsoever. Students are simply to read a "variety of traditional and contemporary literature." Literary study is not addressed with the strength it deserves. It is almost lost in the reading strand.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** Yes. These are all addressed well by the standards in the different strands.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation.** Yes. These are addressed with some different details over the grades. The document should make clear that English conventions are intended.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** No. None of these items is addressed.

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases.** For the most part. These are not clearly addressed in these strands. There is no mention of various sources of information, just sources in print and technology, and no mention of evaluating the validity of information obtained from various sources, especially from technology and the media.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear.** Generally yes. A few unclear expectations are noted throughout these pages.

2. **They are specific.** For the most part.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** For the most part. Some are process objectives (e.g., "collect input from others," "integrate appropriate reading strategies," or "approach a topic in an individualized and purposeful way"). But a majority use such verbs as "analyze," "compare and contrast," "identify," "synthesize," and "demonstrate use of."

4. **They are comprehensive**. For the most part. See the gaps noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding**.

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address**. To some extent. Each area increases in intellectual demand overall. But there doesn't seem to be enough stress on evaluative kinds of thinking tasks at grade 10. A very large number ask students only to "explore," "use," "identify," and "interpret." Moreover, the reading and literature objectives contain no literary specifics to indicate level of difficulty. The intellectual demands would be clear, in the high-school years for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural significance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples**. No.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark.** No.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** To some extent. The standards have many demanding features. But they could be stronger at the high-school level in particular. And without any index to expected grade levels and to some literary specifics, they cannot lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all Washington students.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature.** Yes. This is implied in the communication strand by the expectation that grade 7 students are to identify cultural assumptions and perspectives and, by grade 10, to "show awareness of cultural premises, assumptions, and world views in

order to effectively communicate cross-culturally." This suggests that cultural stereotypes will be taught or encouraged in the classroom, as most pre-college students have not done the kind of in-depth and extensive reading to understand any modern culture's "premises, assumptions, and world views."

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences.** Yes. The standard on reading for literary experience wants students to read literature to "understand a variety of perspectives of self." The standard on comprehending important ideas and details wants students to "link characters, events, and information to prior knowledge, previous experience, and current issues to increase understanding" at all levels.

3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** Yes. The standard on reading for literary experience clearly wants students to read literature to understand "world issues." See E.2 also.

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** No. This is not implied at all in this document.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior.** To some extent. No examples are given of classroom activities, but the standard on reading for literary experience wants high-school students to "identify recurring themes in literature such as "human interaction, identity, conflict and struggle, and economic change." This pushes teachers to choose literature with a particular socio-political orientation or focus, which subverts the literary purposes of literary study. It is not even clear that "identity" and "economic change" have been recurring themes (or the most common or important themes) in the vast body of literature from this country, in British literature, or in world literature in general. One can think of the tensions between the individual and society, thwarted ambitions, moral awakening, and moral corruption, for example, as far more common in Western literature than "identity."

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma**. No.

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow**. No.

Wisconsin

Summary

Strengths: For the most part, the document is clearly written for the general public. It is organized in coherent strands. It clearly expects students to use standard English in writing and speaking. Most areas of the English language arts and reading are addressed adequately by the standards. And most standards are clear, specific, and measurable. It is also one of the few states to clearly address the history and nature of the English language.

Limitations: It does not state that developing literacy skills for participation in American civic life is one of the goals of the English language arts. Some of its standards have an anti-literary and anti-academic thrust. It contains no literary or cultural specifics at all. It does not mention, never mind require, study of American literature in particular. The systematic development of a reading vocabulary is not as strong as it could be.

Recommendations: The document needs to make clear that one goal of the English language arts and reading is to prepare students for participation in the civic life of this particular country and that American literature is one body of literature they are to study. It should also clarify that students will be given systematic instruction in phonics and be expected to read independently and regularly in and outside of school. Above all, some literary specifics should be incorporated into its standards at all educational levels, such as key authors, works, literary periods, and literary traditions, to signal academic expectations for students' reading level as well as their knowledge of the nature and history of this country's literary and civic culture. The document should eliminate the anti-literary and anti-academic orientation of some of its standards.

	Wisconsin	28 State Mean
Total for Section A: Purpose, Audience, Expectations, and Assumptions	18	19
Total for Section B: Organization of the Standards	12	9
Total for Section C: Disciplinary Coverage of the Standards	25	16
Total for Section D: Nature of the Standards	21	15
Total for Sections A, B, C, and D	76	60
Total for Section E: Anti-Literary and Anti-Academic Requirements or Recommendations—Negative Criteria	10	8
Final Sum*	66	51

*The final sum reflects the totals for sections A, B, C, and D minus the totals for section E.

Wisconsin

Date of draft examined: February 1997

A. Purpose, audience, expectations, and assumptions of the standards document(s):

1. **The document is written in clear English prose, for the general public as well as for educators.** For the most part. There are a few obscure or cryptic objectives, such as "compare knowledge of heritage, culture, and life experiences to literature" and "develop and explain perspectives for viewing works of literature including individual, community, national, world, and historical perspectives." It is not clear what these are intended to mean.

2. **It assumes that English is the language to be used in English language-arts classes, and the only language to be used.** Yes. There is nothing to indicate otherwise.

3. **It expects all students to demonstrate use of standard English, orally and in writing.** Yes. The content standards for the language strand indicates that students are to "apply their knowledge of the nature, grammar, and variations of American English." By grade 12, students are expected to "demonstrate versatility and competence in standard American English." In the writing strand, they are expected to have a "working knowledge of English spelling, punctuation, usage, and form."

4. **It acknowledges the existence of a corpus of literary works called American literature, however diverse its origins and the social groups it portrays.** To some extent. "Literature representing the diversity of American cultural heritage" is the syntactically awkward expression used in one middle-grade standard.

5. **It expects students to become literate American citizens**. No. Although the standards contain enough cultural specifics to make it clear in what state and country the students live, developing literacy skills for civic participation is not stated as a goal of the English language-arts standards (students are to read a "wide variety of materials" to respond to "the needs and demands of society and the workplace, and provide for personal fulfillment").

6. **It expects explicit and systematic instruction in decoding skills in the primary grades as well as the use of meaningful reading materials.** Unclear. The standard is for the end of grade 4 and combines major reading strategies together in one sentence ("use phonics, context, and word and sentence structure to pronounce and understand unfamiliar words in context").

7. **It expects students to do regular independent reading through the grades, suggesting how much reading students should do per year as a minimum, with some guidance about its quality.** No. This is not specifically mentioned.

8. **It expects the standards to serve as the basis for clear and reliable statewide assessments.** Yes.

B. Organization of standards:

1. **They are presented grade by grade or in clusters of no more than 3 to 4 grade levels.** Yes. The standards are presented for the end of grades 4, 8, and 12.

2. **They are grouped in categories reflecting coherent bodies of scholarship or research in the English language arts.** Yes. The strands are: language, literature, reading, writing, listening, speaking, research, and media and technology.

3. **They distinguish higher-order knowledge and skills from lower-order skills, if lower-level skills are mentioned.** Yes. A broad content standard for each strand is divided into one to five performance standards, each of which consists of a number of performance objectives. There are too many objectives overall, however, and these would benefit from being organized into more coherent, visible subgroups, whose progression in difficulty over the grades would be easier to work out and observe.

C. Disciplinary coverage of standards:

1. **The standards clearly address listening and speaking. They include use of various discussion purposes and roles, how to participate in discussion, desirable qualities in formal speaking, and use of established as well as peer-generated or personal criteria for evaluating formal and informal speech.** Yes. The listening and speaking standards address a number of features or qualities needed for informal and formal talk in a variety of contexts in and outside of school. They don't address the use of criteria for evaluating formal or informal speech clearly enough.

2. **The standards clearly address reading (and viewing) to understand and use information through the grades. They include progressive development of reading skills and a reading vocabulary, and knowledge and use of a variety of textual features, genres, and reading strategies for academic, occupational, and civic purposes.** For the most part. The standards address reading-skill development and the understanding and use of textual features, genres, and strategies well. Indeed, some standards on informational reading are essentially repeated in the literature strand. Standards on the development of a reading vocabulary appear in the language strand, not in the reading strand. Although they address many aspects of vocabulary knowledge, they do not mention systematic study of a variety of word relationships such as words with multiple meanings, synonyms, antonyms, homophones, homographs, and idioms.

3. **The standards clearly address the reading (or viewing), interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature. They include knowledge of diverse literary elements and genres, use of different kinds of literary responses, and use of a variety of interpretive and critical lenses. They also specify those key authors, works, and literary traditions in American literature and in the literary and civic heritage of English-speaking people that all students should study because of their literary quality and historical significance.** For the most part. They expect students to learn about diverse literary genres, elements, and responses. However, there is no mention of different literary critical perspectives and there are no literary specifics (suggested literary traditions, titles, or authors), even though the standards expect students to read works "representing the diversity of American cultural heritage" and "of various historical periods and cultures ranging from the classical world to the present." And there are unrealistic expectations about how much students can learn about any other culture through a few literary works ("gain insight into cultures and analyze cultural perspectives through a variety of literature"). Most high-school students in this country end up with a minimal knowledge of even their own American culture; it takes vast reading of various kinds to acquire "insights" into any complex, modern culture. The notion that such a feat is possible for K-12 students is likely to encourage little more than a stereotyped view of a "cultural perspective," if indeed any complex, modern country can be said to have "a" perspective.

4. **The standards clearly address writing for communication and personal expression. They require familiarity with writing processes, established as well as peer-generated or personal evaluation criteria, and various rhetorical elements, strategies, genres, and modes of organization.** Yes. The writing standards thoroughly address all aspects of writing, including the use of writing processes, a great variety of genres, rhetorical features, modes of organization, use of established and student-developed criteria, and the qualities of formal writing, including a central idea or thesis, support for ideas, logical organization, and the use of logical transitions.

5. **The standards clearly address oral and written language conventions. They require the use of standard English conventions for sentence structure, spelling, usage, penmanship, capitalization, and punctuation**. Yes. These are addressed with some detail over the grades.

6. **The standards clearly address the nature, dynamics, and history of the English language. They cover the nature of its vocabulary, its structure (grammar), the evolution of its oral and written forms, and the distinction between the variability of its oral forms and the relative permanence of its written form today.** For the most part. Wisconsin is one of the few states that explicitly expects students in its language strand to learn about the vocabulary, structure, and history of the English language, and the formal and informal uses of written and spoken language. It does not make the distinction between the variety of its oral forms and the relative stability of its written form, however, and in the high-school grades teaches a few pieces of inexact dogma about dialect (see E.6 below).

7. **The standards clearly address research processes, including developing questions and locating, understanding, evaluating, synthesizing, and using various sources of information for reading, writing, and speaking assignments. These sources include dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, observations of empirical phenomena, interviews with informants, and computer data bases**. Yes. These areas are all covered by standards in the writing, reading, research, and media and technology strands.

D. Quality of standards:

1. **They are clear**. For the most part. Some are not clear because they seem contradictory. For example, students are to "listen nonjudgmentally to opinions of others" and "detect and evaluate speaker's bias." Others are not clear because their meanings are cryptic (see A.1 above).

2. **They are specific**. Generally yes. Some are too broad, but there are a great many objectives in this document (too many, in fact), and the majority of them are specific in their wording.

3. **They are measurable (i.e., they can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools).** For the most part. Some are process-oriented, such as "practice appropriate reading strategies to understand written material." Others point to attitudes, such as "accept and use helpful criticism." Others suffer from obscure meaning, such as "compare knowledge of life experiences to literature."

4. **They are comprehensive**. For the most part. See the omissions noted above in section C.

5. **They are demanding.**

a. **They are of increasing intellectual difficulty at each higher educational level and cover all important indices of learning in the area they address.** For the most part. However, a progression in intellectual difficulty over the grades is not quite visible in many areas. The document writers seem to have had difficulty in conceptualizing a ladder of increasing complexity over the grades in many areas. This doesn't mean that by the high-school level the expectations are not high; it means that for the elementary and middle school, the expectations may be unrealistic. On the other hand, it is not clear what level of difficulty is expected in the reading and literature objectives because they contain no literary specifics. Intellectual demands would be clear, in the high-school years for example, if a standard required the reading of some specific works or authors of cultural signifi-

cance in American and British literary and intellectual history.

b. **They index or illustrate growth through the grades for reading by referring to specific reading levels or to titles of specific literary or academic works as examples of a reading level.** No.

c. **They illustrate growth through the grades for writing with writing samples**. To some extent. For high school, writing samples showing four different proficiency levels are offered.

d. **For other subdisciplines, they provide examples of specific reading, writing, or oral language features, activities, or assignments that clarify what is expected for each standard or benchmark**. To some extent. A few examples are provided for each strand, but they are very brief and not related to a specific objective.

6. **Their overall contents are sufficiently specific, comprehensive, and demanding to lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all students in the state, no matter what school they attend.** For the most part. While these performance standards have the potential for high expectations, without some literary specifics and some indication of expected reading levels at the end of grade 4, 8, and 12, it is not clear how these standards can lead to a common core of high academic expectations for all Wisconsin students.

E. Negative criteria:

1. **The document implies that the literary or popular culture of our or any other country is monolithic in nature**. To some extent. It is lurking in the notion that there are "cultural perspectives," or "community," "national," or "world" perspectives. Nowhere is the idea conveyed that most modern cultures are extremely complex with respect to the views of its inhabitants. It may be possible to ascribe certain broad traits to a definable group of people or country, but these broad generalizations are always "stereotypes" (which may be positive or negative), and there are always exceptions. These kinds of nuances are never mentioned in standards that talk about "cultures" or "cultural perspectives," that is, students are never asked to examine the variation of views within any one definable social group, community, or culture.

2. **The reading/literature standards require students to relate what they read to their lived experiences**. Yes. In the primary grades, they are to "compare knowledge of life experiences to literature," to "relate setting, characters, and plot to real-life situation," and to "relate new ideas to prior knowledge and experience." In the middle grades, they are to "discuss and explain connections between literature and self." In the high-school years, they are to "connect themes from literature to self and others" and "compare knowledge of heritage, culture, and life experiences to literature." When listening, they are to "relate speaker's ideas and information to own lives."

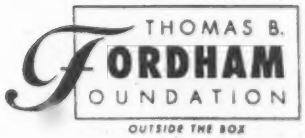
3. **The reading/literature standards want reading materials to address contemporary social issues.** Yes. In the primary grades, they are to use literature as a resource for understanding social issues," in the middle grades, to "relate literary works to local, state, and world issues," and in the high-school years, to "apply knowledge gained from literature as a means of understanding contemporary economic, social, and political issues."

4. **The document implies that all literary and non-literary texts are susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations and that all points of view or interpretations are equally valid regardless of logic, accuracy, and adequacy of supporting evidence.** No. This is not implied by the standards here.

5. **The examples of classroom activities or student writing offered are politically slanted or reflect an attempt to manipulate students' feelings, thinking, or behavior**. No. Few examples are given, but they are straightforward.

6. **The standards teach moral or social dogma**. To some extent. High-school students are, among other things, to "explain language variations as the natural outcome of differences in culture, gender, social class, and ethnicity," even though, in the primary grades, they have learned (correctly) to "connect variations of American English with geography, culture, social, and work settings." By grade 12, they are also to "explain how all dialects communicate equally well in their own cultural settings." The meaning of this dogmatic assertion is not clear. Do all dialects communicate complex ideas in physics and mathematics equally clearly?

7. **The document explicitly or implicitly recommends one instructional approach for all teachers to follow.** Generally no, although there is a slight tendency to encourage teachers to select literature for learning about social issues and for its potential to relate to the student's personal life—extremely limiting qualifications.



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